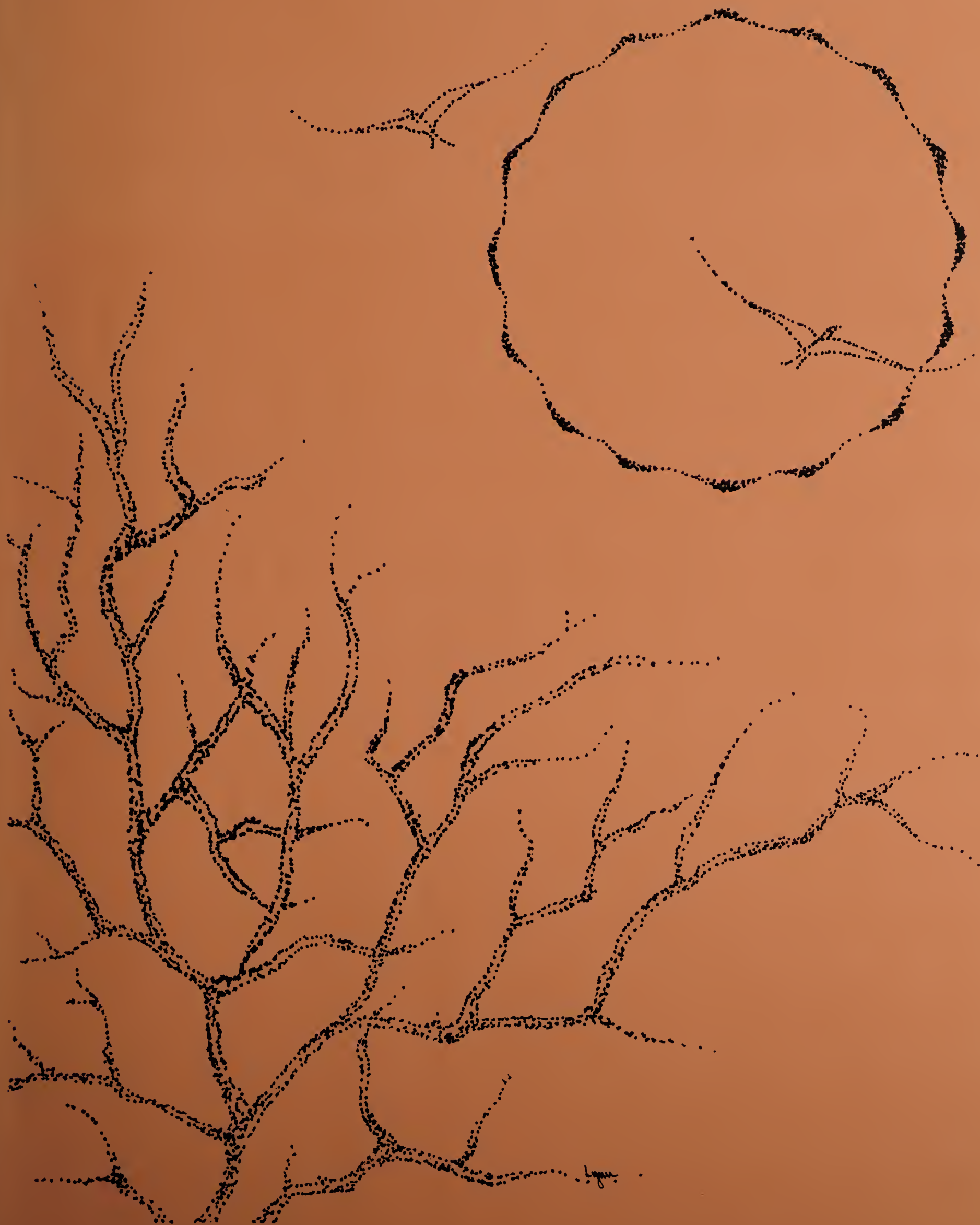


SKYLARK VIII





SKYLARK VIII

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This, the eighth consecutive issue of **Skylark**, is an expression of the talent to be found in Northwest Indiana. Although it is true that some works have come to us from as far away as California, New York, Mexico, Italy and Switzerland, the vast majority of the contributions, as well as **Skylark's** staff, are from the Northwest Indiana region.

Too long has this area been identified as a polluted industrial wasteland haunted by hordes of faceless workers who are unreceptive to real creative talent.

Such a conception is absurd.

Most of the writers and artists whose works have been selected for publication in **Skylark VIII** are proof of the unique literary and artistic talents of the people of Northwest Indiana.

Mary Ann Klimaszewski
Editor-in-Chief

My special thanks to Charles B. Tinkham for all his advice and supervision, and to my staff, the largest and most hard-working one in **Skylark's** history; especially Carolyn Gudgel and Becky House who came through for me.

PRIZE WINNERS

Prose

1st Place:

Steve Tomasula—
“Napoleon and Josephine
and Bob and Judy”
“Unique as Stradivari”

2nd Place:

Karen Lee Jackson—
“The Birthday Present”

Honorable Mention:

James Penn—
“A Surreal Afternoon”

Poetry

1st Place:

Filby Husted—
“Acuated Confoundness in Depth”

2nd Place:

Denise Sobilo—
“Athelas Leaf”

Honorable Mention:

Ann Williamson—
“The Animals”
Mark Pavlovich
Untitled

Graphics

1st Place:

Dianne Kresich
Page 44

2nd Place:

Cliff Alley
Page 31

Honorable Mention:

Valerie Ooms
Page 9
John Bolinger
Page 53

STAFF

Mary Ann Klimaszewski, Editor-in-chief
Rebecca House, Managing Editor
Charles B. Tinkham, Faculty Advisor

Poetry

Mary Chant
Carolyn J. Gudgel
Randie Inman

Prose

Ann Stuebe
Jan Swart
Adele Thomas

Graphics

Arlene Cress
Vivienne Palialogos
Lynn E. Paluga
Irene Spiro

Lay-out

Carolyn J. Gudgel
Rebecca House
Mary Ann Klimaszewski
Toni Lozano
Lynn E. Paluga

Business Managers

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Nickie Roberts
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Babs Kowalczyk

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Mercantile National Bank
(Woodmar Branch)
Ribordy Drugs
Inland Steel
Hammond Clinic
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Jeann Laich

Patrons

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Temple Pharmacy

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Fashion Optical
Mr. Kenny's Restaurant
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Charles Tseng
Ed Andrews
Saul Lerner

Actuated Confoundness in Depth

Love, Serenity and Desire
Spotted paper sets my mind afire.
Ingested with guidance of assorted pals
First trip taken, leaves time for smiles
I can laugh about my plight, though incarcerent I be
with a mind like this, I'll always be free
A slight stiffness in my chest and a giggle in my throat
It's really beautiful to have your soul afloat.

Watching TV reflected by the window, from two ranges down
Listening to a rock station mingled with the gibberish of some idiotic clown.
Walls melted in color of burgundy and plum,
jacked off all night and still didn't come.
Read science fiction between erotic strokes,
there's some strange people up there, but Earth's got the weirdest folks.

Ran 80 miles within myself and didn't move from this stop
watched my life light kiss me drop by drop.

Second stage boosted with the taste of the forbidden fruit
across hallowed mandibles, down a quadrant shoot
Astrally adrift, the Silver Thread's a gigantic bow
Kissing the universe from behind my cosmetic soul.
Inspected all my bones. Found they're all intact
left to go somewhere and don't want to come back.

Saw spiraling time, like notes on ascending scale
went body surfing on a comet's tail
was held in the hand of the creator of all
while I cradled a universe ever so small.

Eyes bulge, throat thick and teeth locked tight,
cheering for the small one in a cockroach fight.
Numbers fell off my calendar—I couldn't put them back in place
looked around behind me and saw the Earth hanging out in space.

The keeper sloshed by jangling his keys,
I smothered head first, up to my knees.
Smelled a thousand roses in one sensual shout
exploded so loud—turned me inside out.

Galactic caverns comprise my mind
Gothic and gargyle to ultra modern sublime
swung a swipe at a cockroach and soot settled in the air
annihilated by laser rays sometime last year.

Took a drink of water and poured silver into my soul
thus stretched my infinite awareness an eon or so
licked chopped peanuts from the rim of a plastic cup
and with a ton of boulders, had my psyche crushed up.

Grabbed a toe hold on myself and flipped a twist on my cock
and tied my last shred of sanity in a greased slip knot.

The force guided me in the 80th dimension
thus, avoiding aberrant dissension
Swirling, twisting graphs-multi hues adorned
peeped in to see a new dream be born.

Lifted the lid to the future and saw the past somehow
stumbled a little closer and fell into now.

Napoleon and Josephine and Bob and Judy

The marquee read:

BONAPARTE AND JOSEPHINE

"It's suppose to be a good picture," Judy said.

Bob grunted in reply.

Judy looked at him, started to speak, then sighed, "Boy," and let her gaze drift away.

Bob could feel her eyes on him before they moved. He knew she wanted him to talk to her. But he wasn't in the mood. He'd rather try to remember which politician defined life as "one damn thing after another" so he could be sure and vote for him. Because nothing seemed to describe his last couple of years as accurately as that. First he had his wedding plans postponed as a result of becoming an unemployed clerk. Then the agency took a year to find him a job which turned out to be cleaning boilers. His mistakes meant extra work for the others who never let him forget it. And now Judy was getting antsy again.

He looked at the poster in the display window. The ticket line was inching past. In red letters at the top it said:

THEIR'S WAS A CONSUMING LOVE

HER WOMAN'S NEEDS WERE UNCOMPROMISING
HIS AMBITION STARVED THEM BOTH

He glanced at Judy thinking, "She's so unrealistic. Why can't she see how complex it all is? She wants everything in black and white when it's more like that." He looked back at the poster.

The middle portion contained several scenes superimposed on one another. Gilded carriages rolled toward a coronation. Calvary with sabers drawn, spurred their steeds into battle. A mob jeered a prisoner as he ascended the steps of the guillotine. A soldier bowed deep to kiss the hand of a lady. In the center, life size, was Napoleon and Josephine locked in a passionate embrace. His uniform was torn and spotted by powder burns. She wore nothing.

Below him it read:

He conquered all the world but not her heart.

For that he had to surrender to win.

Surrender was a word he didn't understand.

Below Josephine it said:

She was ready to sacrifice all for him.

But only on her terms. It was the only
way she could be sure his feelings
matched the depth of her love.

Bob looked at the movie stills Judy was staring at in the next window. A picture of a duel reminded her of Bob. "I wish he'd get worked up over me like he does everything else," she thought.

"A damn movie," Bob said to himself. "A movie when we could be—"

"Look at that," Judy said. She pointed at the manikins in the lobby.

A group of boys were standing around them trying to get as much altitude out of their toes as possible so they could peer down the tear that was made in Josephine's blouse as she tried to hold the bridle of Napoleon's horse.

The figures reflected the ad campaign which showed the producers had a good understanding of the public addiction. They rolled the two thousand foot film with equal doses of what every popular movie had: sex and violence. But that wasn't what would make this picture a block buster. Lots of films were full of sex and violence. Only a few could feign cultural value at the same time. This one did so on the basis of its historical content. "...manners are rough, action graphic, to match the brutal times in which they lived," one commercial explained. And whether they believed it or not, that was the excuse many would use to "endure so much immorality".

Overnight a nation of historians was born. They rallied to relive France's glorious past. Technicolor gore and Sens-A-Sound sighs made it seem as if they were actually there; throwing themselves in front of the musket ball meant for Napoleon or leaving a "close friend's" bedroom at ten in the morning and blushing as they slid stonefaced past wide-eyed servants, all as they had done two hundred years before. True, certain details of their previous life did seem different than they'd remembered. For example, the troops packed gatling guns when gatling guns didn't seem to be invented yet. And Josephine hadn't acted like

such a promiscuous girl the last time they talked. But what did it matter? Few of the time travelers noticed and those who did were labeled as incorrigible nit pickers. After all, this was only a fictional history: entertainment. You wouldn't expect to learn the strategy behind MacArthur's Pacific campaign by reading **Bivouac Baby**. And Bob didn't expect to learn or be entertained by anything. He was too involved in becoming unirkitated at having his plans for the evening put off. He squirmed and shifted in his seat till near the end when a ball was given in honor of Napoleon's latest victory. The fading music grabbed Bob's attention and he looked up to see Napoleon spirit Josephine away to her nuptial chambers.

The camera panned across the bedchamber displaying the furniture. Upholstered horsehair chairs with matching ottomans were sprinkled over the walnut floor. A dressing table and mirror were draped in diaphanous silk. Cherubs tied the ends of the pastel material into garland like knots. A fire glowed from the marble hearth. Dominant in the room was an enormous four poster. Its fluted columns supported a dark green canopy, richly quilted. Bouquets of feathers crowned the top. Napoleon stood behind Josephine at the foot.

He kneaded her porcelain neck with his battle toughened hands.

Josephine's eyes were closed. She murmured almost to herself, "Is it virtuous to leave our guests so?"

Napoleon's caresses became more rhythmic. "Virtue for me is what you make it."

Judy said loud enough for Bob to hear over the soundtrack, "Boy. You never said anything like that to me."

Bob scowled at her but she didn't see. She was staring straight ahead at Bonaparte and Josephine. Josephine pirouetted in his arms. His sword came between them. She back away smiling as he slid it to the side then pulled her to him. Her fingers dug into his shoulders while his explored her bare back.

"A few days ago me thinks I loved you. Now that I have seen your face, I know I love you a thousand times more than the Czar has peasants."

"And I my emperor. I also know no happiness save when I am in your arms. Not a night passes I am not there in my dreams."

"Whether I am buried in business or leading my troops or inspecting camp, my adorable Josephine, thoust fill my mind. I idolize you. No, I love you beyond idolotry."

"Boy," huffed Judy. "You **sure** never said that."

"It's only a movie," Bob answered louder and more annoyed sounding than he wanted to. "Nobody lives like that anymore."

"You are the source of feeling that make me as gentle as nature herself and of impulses as catastrophic as a thunderbolt."

"Boy," said Judy.

"Josephine, your memory robs me of my reason."

"Will you come off it already," said Bob.

"I hunger for you so that were it not for an attentive orderly, I would have opened my veins at the public bath of Amberg."

"Boy, you'd never open your veins at the public bath for me."

Bob was silent.

"Would you."

Bob suddenly become engrossed in the movie.

"Would you."

A voice rolled out of the darkness. "For Christ's sake, tell her you'd open your veins at the public bath so she'll shut up already."

Bob whispered, "What's eating you tonight?"

"Nothing."

"Come on, what is it?" He said, yanking her arm.

"It's—your shoes. You take them for granted."

Bob looked at her blankly.

"I mean, you're working. You think you'd be able to buy some decent shoes for a change."

"My astrologers number the days for my return to your bosom." The camera began to slowly move down the embracing figures as Napoleon thrust his face into Josephine's exposed cleavage.

Josephine's voice took on a hoarser tone. "And I, mon general, cannot drink a cup of tea without cursing the martial ambi-



Valerie Ooms

tion that separates me from the soul of my life." The camera framed the lovers from the knee down. Josephine's feet lifted to their toes. Covering them were satin slippers embroidered with the French standard. A tiny jeweled broach was clipped to the back seam. She worked at the pink silk tie on her right foot with her left.

"What about your soes?" said Bob.

"What about my shoes?"

"Have you looked at them lately? They've been around the block a few times themselves you know."

Napoleon's belt and sword fell to the floor. Several layers of petticoat soon followed. "The charms of my incomparable Josephine kindle a flame that burns incessantly in my heart, through the senses."

"It's not just your shoes. It's everything."

The music swelled as more and more clothing cascaded down. A corset, chemises, blouse, shawl, bodice, frock, stockings, gloves, garters, girdle, bloomers, fichu, sash, scarf, shirt, waistcoat, vest, suspenders, and breeches rained down blotting out their legs. Josephine's wire bustle bounced when it hit the floor. They stood calf deep in the garments: Josephine wearing only her perfume, Napoleon his boots.

Her hand entered the picture and started to unfasten the buckle at the top of them. His hand came down and rested on her's, stopping it. "Is not my lord going to remove his riding boots?"

"Alas, chere Josephine, they are necessary. Such has my exhilaration for amour in leather grown."

They stood erect again cooing and slurping. Then Josephine was lifted into his arms. Her bare feet went off the top of the screen.

"Sometimes you make me feel like I didn't matter," said Judy.

"You know how I feel."

"Do I?"

The camera followed the general's boots. He stepped out of the mound of clothes and marched to the bed. The leather straps that supported the mattress creaked under the weight of their bodies. The picture zoomed in on the now horizontal feet jutting from the edge of the bed. Josephine's were wide apart. Her toes pointed at the ceiling.

The heels of Napoleon's boots nearly rubbed as they rocked between her feet, the tips facing the floor.

"We'll get married. That's what this is about isn't it?" said Bob.

"Oh, Napoleon. My Napoleon."

"It's not that. I can understand you taking your time about—"

"I'm not taking my time!" Bob protested. A "Shhh!" was shot at him. He sank a little lower in his seat, repeating himself through clenched teeth. "I'm not taking my time. It's just I have to get some things out of the way first. There are times when you have to forget what you want and be rational."

"Josephine. Josephine."

"You're working now."

"I hate that job. It's dirty and hard. It's mind numbing. I work till I'm dead."

"Tell me you love me Napoleon."

"Then why did you take it? Why didn't you wait till something better came along?"

"I had to. I'd been useless long enough."

"I love you Josephine."

"You weren't useless. I wouldn't feel that way."

"I'm not you."

"But how can you look for a good one if you're there twelve hours a day?"

"My body aches for you when you're gone, Napoleon."

"I can't. But that doesn't mean I don't love you."

"I love you, Josephine."

"And sometimes I wonder if you tell me that just to hold me."

"I need security."

"Stay with me always, Napoleon."

"So do I but of a different kind. I want to be married more than anything—"

"That's not it I told you."

"Than what is?"

"Faster! Faster!"

"I don't know. It's just you look forward to something and then it doesn't happen. Then pretty soon you get scared that it never will. That wears on me."

"Harder! Harder!"

"I got to live my life my way you know."

"Ride me mon gen-er-al! Ride me till I scream!"
"I know but. . . I mean, like you never even asked me if I wanted an engagement ring."
"We don't have money to blow on stupid things like that."
"It's not stupid to me. It's something I've always wanted."
"It's not practical. We know about us. What do you need a billboard for? Status symbol that's all it is. I thought you loved me for what I am, not what I give you."
"Oh. Oh. Oh."
"I do."
"Then why are you trying to change me?"
"Ohhhh. Ohhhhhh."
"I'm not. I just want you to be honest with me. Show me how you feel."

Bob turned to argue but when he did, he saw the forlorn look of an orphan in Judy's eyes. He took her hand and whispered, "I miss you when we're apart."

"Then appreciate me when we're together."

Napoleon's thrashing boots went limp. Josephine hooked her feet around them.

"You don't think I appreciate you?"

"You don't show it."

Bob reached into his back pocket and pulled out his wallet. He removed a piece of paper from the bill compartment and handed it to Judy. "Here," he said.

Judy squinted at it in the flickering light.

The picture on the screen drifted from a window, to candles burnt down to the holders, to the bed bathed in a morning's light. Josephine's head rested on Napoleons shoulder, their bodies intertwined beneath the covers. His boots hung out. Josephine looked into the contemplative expression on Napoleon's face. "What is it?" she asked.

"What is it?" said Judy.

"Laying here with you is heaven," said Bonaparte.

"Hotel reservations," said Bob.

"Josephine, some day I'll be free of the anxiety and responsibility. Free to spend all my time with you, with nothing to do but love you."

Josephine sat up in the bed. "I do not take your meaning. Are not my lord free now?"

"You got reservations for us to spend the night in a hotel?"

"Alas, the Austrians will not let me rest."

"Then you are not to stay with me?" said Josephine.

"The weekend," said Bob. "With a view of the bay. Why do you think I didn't want to come here?"

"Bob, you should have told me."

"Then the words you spoke last night were merely another well laid strategy of mon gen-er-al."

"I wanted to surprise you. 'I've been planning this since before I took that damn job.'"

"Never say so, Josephine. You know it is you and only you I desire."

Judy curled her arm around Bob's. "Oh, Bob."

"Just as you only desired Italy. Then you only desired Germany. Then Egypt. Then Holland, Spain, Poland, Hungry. You are not happy till everyone is under your three cornered hat. I am not another country waiting to be plundered."

"I know I might not show it at times. But while my hands are on boilers, my mind is with you."

"There is no comparison, mon chere. It is true my mind is intent on vast plans but my heart is utterly engrossed by you."

Josephine ran her fingers through Napoleon's hair. "Che little corporal—the insatiable conqueror. Sometimes me thinks it is only the conquest of me you love."

"There's a magnum of champagne waiting for us."

"Never say so, Josephine. The words load my being with lead."

"Bob, that's beautiful." Bob and Judy smiled into each others' eyes.

"Then why won't you forsake your armies? Stay with me. I am a woman. A man needs a woman. You are a man."

"I am also a soldier."

"Do not soldiers need love?"

"Politics can have no heart. Only a head. And mine calls me to the Republic."

"Without you I will surely hang myself from a weeping willow in the gardens of Schöonbrunn."

"You're all that keeps me alive sometimes," Judy said.

"Then come. Come with me on the trail."

"The week was so long with the reservations so close and you so far."

"I cannot. My soul would mourn. My heart is in chains and I imagine things that terrify me. You must stay."

"That's impossible. Nature has cursed my spirit with resolute destiny while yours she has constructed of lace and gauze."

Bob smiled. "I couldn't wait to get you in bed." He squeezed Judy's hand.

"Then once again I must release you to my rival—war? Do you expect my feelings to remain unchanged each time you desert me so?"

"If you love me less it must be that you never loved me at all?"

"When will I see you again."

"Let's leave," said Judy.

"I will send for you once the English have been pressed back."

"Now?" asked Bob.

"From where?"

"I can't wait either," said Judy.

"Waterloo."

Bob and Judy got up. They fought their way through the gauntlet of knees to the aisle. They hurried to the double doors arm in arm as Wellington's artillery were drawn up hill. His gunners stationed them, then took their positions beneath the brush.

Early next morning low rumbling thunder woke Judy up. It sounded like 18th century cannon fire in the distance. Neither of them had bothered to close the curtains. Instead, Bob and Judy, delightfully exhausted, had fallen asleep watching the waves scatter the harbor lights.

A succession of flashes silhouetted the horizon. Judy snuggled against the warmth of Bob's body. "Maybe I am being selfish," she thought. "That job bothers him enough without my nagging. He's got his reasons. They're good ones to him. He's sincere. He needs me to support him. It's my duty to support him and sometimes you have to put duty over everything. The rest is just a matter of time. We're young. We've all the time in the world. Napoleon always came back to Josephine. We have to compromise. He's right. I've been demanding things my way. I won't even mention it till he gets a good paying job. Something he likes. What's a few months?"

The interval between the flashes of lightning and thunder was getting shorter. Droplets of rain began to tap against the window. Being out of the weather, yet in view of it, filled Judy with a sense of security. She thought of the masons rhythmically laying brick on brick as they built the wall she hid behind. And she marveled for a moment, just a moment, at how easy they made it to ignore nature. She turned to look at Bob's face. She listened to his faint peaceful breathing. Then balled herself into the pocket his curved body formed under the covers thinking, "I'll have to go back and see how that movie ended."

Outside, the wind was picking up. A navigation buoy pitched wildly.

STEVE TOMASULA



Cliff Alley

The Animals

Down hill, in back of the house,
the old barn wall;
the garage built over it.

There, ear to stone,
I would listen to animals;
the lifting of hoof
from cold ground,
the curry of rump against stall.
I heard the dream walk of the sleeping dog
in that room
and the tongue of the cat stop grooming,
as he also listened.

The winter sun froze there.
I would pick the ice off,
little piles glittering
the toes of my boots.

Once, I got a stone loose.
Wanting the warm breath of animals,
I put my face close to the opening;
I saw eyes, live as candle fire,
in the untested air.

ANN WILLIAMSON

3:15 a.m. and a dark alley-way. Footsteps,
fear, and a hand tearing clothes off. It
lasted too long. Humiliated and degraded
and no one cared. Two years to the day
she still cries.

MARK PAVLOVICH

ARTICULATE BACTERIA

On the counter of a new
cafeteria,
guaranteed free of bacteria,
I heard a microscopic
woo'er,
talking plainly of
amour,
saying with a lover's
sigh,
"Darling, let us
multiply."
And from a hidden counter
crack,
a female coyly answered
back,
"Things up there are advertised,
as being strictly
sterilized."

CHARLES H. BOYD

Lying on an old blue quilt
my small body
under yours,
Your rays absorb me
like the earth
embraces rain.

SUE PANTHER

The Expiration of the Candle

The wine
no longer tastes sweet,
The breeze,
a moment before-
- light caress-
now, a nuisance;

Looking out
across the veranda
the plain
looks parched
and dry;

The sun
now scratching my skin
as i turn
& see her image
disappear
from the stairs;

A tumble weed
bounced along
by the wind
rounds the corner
& draws my attention.

MICHAEL GOODSON

I Am the Prison

I am the Prison. Within my walls is a way of life totally different from any other way of life, and yet basically the same as all ways of life. I am the keeper of many men and women. Not by choice, but out of Necessity. There are those who say my personality and character are bad. And there are others who fight to keep me this way. I have no say in the matter.

I am the Prison, lived in by many men and women, who scream for the chance to correct their mistakes, who plead for society not to consider them a contagious disease and to give them the opportunity to prove that they are well. I hear men and women cry out in the night for their loved ones. This cry is more than an emotional outburst. It is the genuine feeling of need for someone to help. These men and women have found themselves clutched in the hands of trouble and lack the understanding to know why. They want, desperately, to prove to themselves and to others that they are not the "stereotyped" prison inmate—dumb, evil, sick and treacherous.

I am the Prison. I am not a handsome thing. My outward appearance is often a sickly gray. My conditions are extremely bleak. I'm not much by any measure. The dinginess of my confines breeds hate, greed, perversion and misunderstanding. I, with my administrators, constantly keep the men and women in conflict with themselves. I foster prejudices by favoring some and not others, and I maintain control by undermining inmate unity.

I am the Prison. My main and only reason for existence is confinement. If rehabilitation occurs, it is not my doing. I leave that the informed and caring people who sometimes visit, who sometimes help. Times are changing and the world is becoming more advanced, more complicated. But I stay the same. As I, the Prison, see it, a better understanding of human beings is needed. To put a man or woman behind my walls and then forget about them is a crime against the Moral Standards of humanity. But who am I to speak and who will listen to me? I am only the Prison.

FILBY HUSTED



Gary Scheidt

UNIQUE AS STRADIVARI

Theodore Tobias would be dead exactly one year from today. But he didn't know it. And no one could tell by the way he lived. But even if they could, or if he knew, would it have made a difference? He got up this morning as he had every morning of the 73 years of his life. He sat down to breakfast as he had for the last 68 years. He glanced at the sheet music he would practice that day as he had for the past 64 years. He said, "Good morning," to his wife as he had for the last 15 years. He opened the newspaper as he had for the past ten years. He ignored the pain in his side as he had for the past six months.

He had to ignore it. To admit it was there would be to admit he was old. Old and sick. Too old and sick to keep up with the other violins in the symphony. So he made up his mind that it wasn't there. It wouldn't win. It would not drive him from the orchestra. But it was gaining allies.

"How are you feeling today, dear?" his wife asked.

Theodore Tobias grunted in reply.

His wife fidgeted in her seat, her hands drawing warmth from the coffee cup they cradled. She judged several phrases in her head though she knew what his reaction would be no matter which was used. But if she, his own wife, didn't say anything, who would? She wet her lips and plunged ahead. "Maybe you should take today off."

The paper crushed between his fists. "No!" he thundered.

The harshness of his voice and taut jaw didn't frighten his wife. She'd seen both before. "It'd just be one day. I'm sure the maestro would understand."

"He understands nothing."

"Then how about half a day? You could skip the afternoon session."

"Not one day. Not half a day. Not one measure."

"But—"

"No! That's it! Can't a man rest even in his own home?"

His wife wanted to say, "I'm only trying to help," but she knew that would only provoke him more. Instead she endured her own silence and watched him fumble with the sheets of music trying to gather them faster than he was capable.

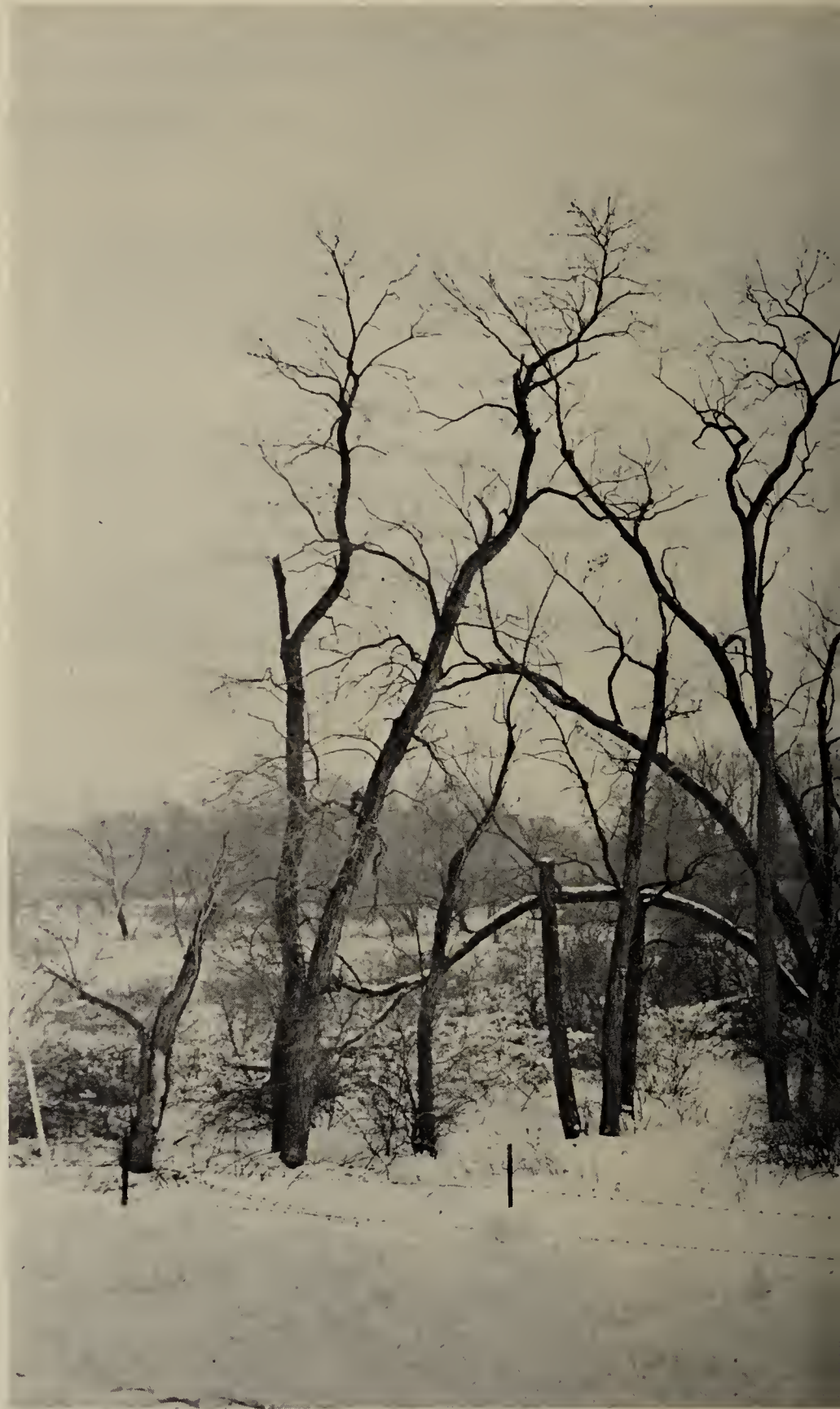
The harder he tried, the more slipped away, and the madder he got; till he leaned down and swept them into his arm as though he was wiping crumbs over the table's edge. He stomped into the next room and slammed the door. He was in his last refuge now. Not even his wife dare disturb him once this door was shut. He put the sheets on the music stand roughly, several of the loose pages falling to the floor. Tobias looked at them laying in a mangled heap as disjointed as his thoughts. His eyes and shoulders went slack as though the sight sapped all his energy. Had even the inanimate black notes turned against him? He let them lay there for the moment and picked the violin from its case.

It was a Stradivari, handcrafted in 1723. The red wood was rich and beautiful in the light. Stradivari made over a thousand of these instruments. Each one was exquisite, yet so unique they were compared to snowflakes. The two hundred year old gloss polish contrasted sharply with Tobias's 73 year old hands.

He sat down in front of the stand and laid the violin across his lap. The business of readying it crowded out his other thoughts allowing him to become more himself. By the time he had finished tightening the nut at the end of the bow, his mind was in order and he strained to do the same with the pages. It was easier here at home. Away from the eyes. He could use the bow as a hoe and lift the edges to his hand. He told himself, "You'll have to be more careful this afternoon. If pages fall there, you'll have to bear the pain and bend over like everyone else." As he shuffled them into their correct sequence, he thought how ironic his present situation had become.

When he was a child, it seemed as if the whole world was forcing a violin into his hands. Now that he was an old man, just as many seemed to be trying to force it out. "That's only natural," he reasoned. Now he was the poor old Mr. Tobias, let's see if he needs help cutting his food. Then he was the third and youngest son. His father's last hope for a prodigy in the family.

Edward was the oldest. And as his father liked to say, was neither willing nor able. He grew up to become, as all Tobias children must become something, a successful lawyer. Bernard, the second born, was willing, but unfortunately unable. This combination of attributes molded him into a fine music store



proprietor and an excellent teacher. Theodore was both willing and able.

He looked down and smiled at the double jointed hand that once skipped so effortlessly over the strings. The hand that knew what to play before the mind told it. The hand that caused the older Tobias to quit his position with the Prague Conservatory to become his twelve year old son's manager. The hand neither of his brothers had. The genetic freak of a hand. The miserable snarled foot of a hand. The slave that now had to be driven to duty with a lash, and often moved long after it was too late.

Theodore took the tube of liniment from his jacket's inner pocket and worked some into his knuckles. "Yes, it was a wonderful hand," he thought, "But that was then, and this is now." He capped the liniment and did his flexibility exercises. The fingers bent stiffly as though they had forgotten how during the night. They felt the way legs do after being cramped in one position too long. Pin pricks danced through the muscles till more blood came to them making the pain go dull, duller, then gone. When he could stretch his middle finger to the base of his life line, he rosined the bow. Apprehensively he shouldered his violin and brought the bow to its strings. He held his breath. He could never be sure of what would happen anymore—whether there was a lady or a tiger behind the door. He drew the first note. Today



Gary Scheidt

he would be safe. It was the lady. The hand had chose to cooperate. And it didn't matter that the printed symbols didn't appear as sharp as they once did. The music was familiar. A hint was enough. His eyes raced as many as twelve notes ahead of the ones at his fingers. But today the hand didn't tire, then fall behind. Nor did the pain in his side demand precious attention.

After two hours he cased his instrument. He was satisfied. A cab would be waiting to take him to the train for the ride downtown. Another would deliver him to the employee's entrance of Orchestra Hall.

In a way his life was much like this trip. The more it was traveled, the less familiar it became. Signs, timetables, remodeling: he gave up trying to keep account of the buildings they passed enroute five seasons ago. Make sure you get off at the right stop. That was hard enough; just as playing the notes that were written was. Aleatory permutations, avant garde textures, and other musical theory the others argued about; Tobias didn't recognize a word. Then there were the faces: like too many new buildings passing by the window one after another.

Tobias heard the sounds a roomful of them make when he arrived at rehearsal. It got louder as he neared the stage till he stood on it adding his own creaks and sighs. He looked up through the crowd of musicians trying to pick the easiest path through them. He bumped his way to his seat saying "excuse

me," to backs and people who didn't even notice his presence let alone his soft apologies. After sitting down, he propped the music up being careful not to drop any. He squinted at the notes in an attempt to memorize them so he wouldn't have to depend on the undependable. All around him the laughing and talking continued. Tobias struggled to shut out the noise, but it kept at him; scratching, pawing, sniffing for a way in. Finally, he looked up trying to display his irritation. "Don't they see I'm working? Like they should be?" The others were enjoying themselves too much to notice the solitary, seated figure. Tobias turned the music face down and breathed, "Always new faces.

"Paul Salo, the cellist is gone," he thought. "Been gone for quite a while now. And Stevos Dooshezhneh, a fine violinist, died three years ago. Or was it four? Or did he retire?" Tobias couldn't remember. To him they were the same anyway. "The symphony went on," he told himself, "Just as it will when I die or retire. Retire?" The word itself tormented him more than any physical discomfort could. "What would I do? Sit around and listen to records? Teach? I can hardly stomach my own mistakes let alone someone else's. No, I'll not retire." He looked around at the other faces. The ever crowding, always younger faces. Breathing his air. Coveting his seat. "And they'll not retire me either. I'm still Theodore Tobias. I can still play with the best." Theodore could feel his adrenalin pumping. That was good. For although it aggravated the pain in his side, it seemed to strengthen the rest of his body. The pain he could usually ignore.

Maestro Uri appeared on stage. The others took their places. Tobias looked at him warily. "What tortures does he have planned for us today?" he asked himself.

The maestro had been hired to breath life into the Webber Philharmonic, which critics said was fast becoming a corpse. The reason—lack of expertise. "Expertise," Maestro Uri explained, "is proportional to practice." So practice they must. Every day. Three hours a day as a group, another hour and a half in sections. And no one had better prove unreliable. The maestro would listen to no excuses. He said so his first day at the podium. "This is a business. You can't get results with excuses. Without results, any business must fold. This one will not fold."

When the clatter of chairs and people quieted to a level that could be spoken over, Maestro Uri called out, "Okay people. We'll pick it up from F."

Theodore smiled. That was the same piece he had practiced at home. They played it over and over again; fourteen times before moving on. This was mostly violin rest. Today really was a good day. The group rehearsal was equally pleasing: mostly talk by the first chair. There was no need for concentration that had to overpower the pain in his side. No arthritic joints to force into position. No attempts to replace sight with memory.

Tobias felt his side pucker. He laughed at it. "Go ahead and nag," he told his body. "Wail all you want. You can't distract me if I'm not concentrating, fool." It really was a good day.

The next was not.

Theodore had forgotten his liniment at home. His knuckles ached. His side felt as if it had been branded. The Maestro Uri picked today of all days to rehearse the long arpeggio passage—the most difficult measures in the program.

The oboes started to play. The strings didn't come in for several bars. Tobias waited. He had his music turned to where the first violins—him, entered. He read it trying to fix as much as he could in his mind. This wasn't easy, looking at one note and hearing another.

The mellow tones of a bassoon smoothed over a pause. They were getting nearer. Two french horns added muted notes at the same time crisp ones rang from the bells of the trumpets. It would be any second now. They were on his page. Tobias fixed the tail piece of the violin under his chin. He marked time listening. "Steady. Steady," he thought. The other instruments had blended into one voice and soon his violin would be swept along with them. The muscles in his arm cocked. "Steady. Steady." His eyes slid along the score. His foot began to tap out the rhythm. "Steadyyyy—now."

The strings sang, adding a sweetness no other instrument could. Tobias couldn't appreciate it though. His jaw was tensed. His eyes were fixed on the music, his attention on positioning his fingers. The music was getting away from him. He locked his mind on the hand as if he could move it by sheer mental effort. "Faster. Faster," he commanded. "Faster." But

today his hand would only take on one note at a time though his eyes devoured groups.

"Stop," said the maestro. "Something doesn't sound right."

Theodore began to sweat. "Concentrate," he told himself. "Concentrate."

The baton fell. They started over. Again the hand defied him.

"Concentrate," Tobias told himself. But now his side decided to join the hand. Tobias felt a dull throbbing sensation there. It was as if a devil sat next to him and nudged him below the ribs at the most crucial moments. "Concentrate. Ignore the side. Concentrate on the hand. The notes. The hand."

"Stop. Someone was off in the strings."

Tobias cursed his hand. It was like trying to win the Preakness riding a mule. All his whipping, all his knowledge was futile when applied to this stump. Plus there was his side. Tobias turned red. Those around him must have guessed who it was by now.

"Again."

The throbbing got stronger. "Concentrate." But he couldn't. The devil was pounding on his side now. Constantly. Demanding attention. Screaming, "Forget the music. Think of me. Think of me."

"No," Tobias argued. "The music. Think of the music. You won't beat me. You won't make an invalid of me. I can play. I can still play."

"Stop. Someone is still off in the strings."

Tobias thought he saw the maestro look at him. He swallowed hard. "He knew I forgot my liniment today," he thought. "He knew my side was bothering me. I don't know how, but he knew. Why else would he have picked the arpeggios for today. Trim the dead wood. Those were his very words. He wants to use me as an example. Well, you picked a poor example. You won't beat me. None of you."

"Again."

Again they started. Again the side demanded attention. Again the swollen knuckles hobbled through the gauntlet.

"Stop. Again," the maestro said with no pause between his words.

The pain brought tears to Tobias' eyes.

"Stop. Again."

Again the same movement. Over and over.

It was like having someone beat you with a hose. If you wince you get another beating, and they'll keep coming till you stop. Tobias could think of nothing but the pain. After each note he nearly threw down the violin, and rushed out, away from it all. He wouldn't care what they thought. Just to lay down, take some pressure off his side, was all that mattered in the world. After each note he said, "No. That's just what they all want. I'm not a cripple. I'm not."

This time the maestro let them continue to the end of the measure. When they finished he said, "Alright, turn to B."

Tobias sighed. It was a sigh of relief, not satisfaction, though. He knew he had winced. Probably more so each time, and the maestro had only given up momentarily, tired of the game. "He knew it was me," Tobias thought. "Why doesn't he come out and say it. The coward. Why doesn't he just yell out, It was Theodore Tobias everyone. He's an old man. He can't do it anymore. We'd all be better off without him. He's overcrowding the life boat, and we'll all drown if we don't throw him off."

The section they were on now contained mostly rests. He would only have to draw the bow three or four times: something any student could do. Even that wasn't easy today. The burning in his side made just sitting in the chair difficult.

He watched the violinist next to him from the corner of his eye. He envied the fluency his fingers had. The bow seemed almost liquid. Tobias felt as if he might cry. "Why do they keep me on," he thought.

Finally the session ended. Going over the time allotted to it, the section rehearsal was cancelled. Theodore cased his instrument and made his way between the folding chairs to the stage's apron.

Maestro Uri had just finished talking to a couple of the other musicians. When he saw Tobias he left the podium to meet him. Tobias forced his bent frame as erect as he could—the little act he instinctively put on for anyone of importance.

"Did you sleep well last night, Theodore?" the maestro asked.

"Yes. Yes, I did," Tobias answered. Suddenly he realized he had condemned himself. For if he had slept well, what then was the reason for his poor performance? He stammered then said, "After I took a sleeping pill that is."

The maestro arched his eyebrows into a sympathetic expression that seemed all too ready to Tobias. "Just what I thought," he said. He put his hand on Tobias' elbow. Tobias looked at it. "You've got to take better care of yourself. You're not as young as you once were."

Tobias opened his mouth to defend himself, but the maestro had strode away and was joking in loud tones with a pair of the other violinists. He turned and walked out to the street, alone.

He muttered to himself all the way home. "I don't need your sympathy. Your gooey-eyed looks. Grease paint smiles. Constant questions. How are you feeling. They all ask that, but none of them care. They're just testing me. Poking, probing like I'm a frog in a Petri dish with its skin folded back to expose its workings; wondering how long can he keep on. How long will it be before his death benefits my career? A young man is ill and it's okay. Take a couple days off. Older man is ill and it's time for him to quit. I haven't missed a rehearsal in fifteen years. You're not as young as you used to be."

As much as Tobias wanted to deny it, his side and fingers wouldn't let him. It'd been years since a soloist shook his hand as applause accompanied him from the stage. It was even longer since he'd been the soloist. No one waited for him backstage anymore. Not even his wife. He didn't blame her though. It was harder for her to get around these days. Still it would be nice. Much nicer than the desolate cab to the train and the crowded ride home. Tobias spent it looking at his reflection in the window made mirror-like by the blackness outside. The others spent it staring at him. No matter how often he looked up he could always catch their eyes fan away from him. It must have been the tux. His was probably the first most of them had ever seen outside of a wedding. How they laughed the time that little brat asked him to pull a rabbit out of his hat. "Even that wouldn't be so bad if only I didn't have to push my way through the throng of well wishers that waited for the others," he thought. He'd given up his comeback scheme long ago. Now it was a matter of hanging on. Not allowing them to turn him into a vegetable. He'd seen it happen to too many others. "There's a big party, but they stop coming around soon after it. I was just as guilty."

"That's probably why they keep me on. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the symphony is coming up soon. They want a relic from the original to hold up to the patrons. Come see the old man. The freak of nature who's still at it." This was a sobering thought. It snapped Tobias out of the mood of self pity he was beginning to indulge in. "No," he said. "They keep me because I can play. Who isn't older than they used to be. It will be a long time, a very long time, before my violin is still."

And so Tobias passed the next months of his life: with the pain, the hand and the questions. How he hated those probing, insincere questions and those who tried to rob him of his last shred of respect—his privacy.

"There's nothing wrong with me," he shouted at practice one day. His hand had strayed too near the violin's bridge and a piercing shriek fouled the air. Tobias could feel everyone look at him and yelled, "There's nothing wrong," before anything was even said.

But there was something wrong with him. Everyone knew it. Still he could never admit it. Not to the maestro. That'd be the same as resigning. And he couldn't admit it to his wife. She would phone the maestro, and he'd force Tobias out for his own good, as if he knew what was good for him. But most of all he couldn't admit it to himself, for that'd be the most fatal of all. Instead, he composed ingenious excuses to tell himself. And most of these were very believable. However, they didn't always help.

"Piano, Theodore. Piano. Play more softly," the concert master kept telling him one day. "The accompaniment isn't supposed to drown out the melody."

It sounded just right to Theodore. A little soft if anything. He rushed to get the violin out once home and played the note as soft as he knew how—nothing. He inched up the scale to the violin's limit. The notes became progressively softer. He stood in front of the mirror to make sure he really was playing the highest ones. When he put down the violin, he wept uncontrollably.

But he didn't quit. After he had cried all he could, he sat back down to the music and started over. He concentrated on the pressure he applied rather than the volume he heard. Day after day he did this; never thinking about the course he was on; never stopping to ask himself, "Why"—until a friend came over one

Sunday afternoon on his way to an art fair in the park.

"Are you sure you don't want to come with us, dear?" his wife asked just before they left.

"I'm sure. You know I'd rather stay here." It was the most difficult lie he had ever told. The sun was shining, and Tobias could see large billows of white clouds against a cobalt blue sky. He longed to be out in it. But there was practice to do. The hand to be served, and he knew if he went he would be too tired to lift the bow afterwards.

"Go on," he told his wife while he thought, "Why should she suffer because I'm in chains?"

"Well, if you're sure you don't mind."

From the window, he watched them drive away. A thousand memories came rushing back. He saw himself four years old. He was taught to read music before his primer. Three years later came piano lessons. When he was ten he was made to play the organ in church every Sunday, all Sunday. "You should be glad to use the gift God gave you for His glory," his mother would tell him as she struggled to fasten the stiff Eton collar around his neck.

Next came the concerts. One after another. His father arranged these. And though they stayed in the best hotels and ate far better than the rest of the family back home, Theodore felt strangely detached from the goings on about him. For although he dressed like an adult, and worked like an adult, and was always with adults, he wasn't one of them. He felt as firm in their world as his tiny legs dangling from their furniture.

Then there was the conservatory and Clariese. He was 20 years old and they were in love. It had been a Sunday afternoon much like this one. She begged him to go sailing in the lagoon. But how could he? There was the expense of education and instruments to pay for. His family back home. No one would pay the little they did to hear anything less than brilliance. Brilliant technique demands practice. Always the practice. From a wooden chair he watched her, the sun, her white bonnet. She left laughing, arm in arm with another man and never looked back.

He threw himself into his work to forget then and he did it again now. It wasn't as easy this time. His whole life was ahead of him then. It seemed as if he had wasted it now: playing someone else's music. Living how others wanted. Giving them what they wanted to hear. He cursed his brothers for not being born with the hand instead of him. He hated them for the freedom they enjoyed. For the cuts they suffered as children. The love they had won and lost. The children and grandchildren they fathered.

They all told him how lucky he was. He was famous. A somebody. Were they so ignorant as to not realize he'd trade it all to see Clariese again? He cursed himself for not smashing the violin and running out to her when he had the chance.

He loved his wife, but it wasn't the same. There was never the young passion he felt for Clariese. He was too dead inside for that by the time he met her. In fact, their marriage started as a matter of convenience. It was only afterwards that he came to love her. And it was only the night before last that he realized how much she loved him.

He had gone to bed early, exhausted from the battle with the hand and the pain. She thought he was asleep. He heard her pray, "Please God, let him die on the stage." She alone understood.

And now he was the reason she was with a friend instead of the man she loved. But what could he do? The concert season opened next month and there was the hand and the pain to cope with. He couldn't waste one of the lulls the pain had taken today on an art fair. "And I won't quit," he told himself. "I won't do what they want. Not this time."

The thoughts Tobias had that afternoon slowly consumed him during the week. They poisoned his life till he could only ask, "What difference would it have made if I had never lived? Have I wasted my life?"

From then on his physical condition began to deteriorate faster than it had. The pain in his side throbbed more often, then incessantly, night and day. He was afraid to test his hearing. Even the satisfaction of having made it to another opening night was no consolation.

When it came time to leave for it, he kissed his wife, something he hadn't done in over a year; and went to the waiting cab. As it pulled away he saw her in the door waving.

His hand felt limber that evening. Even the pain had vanished. He wasn't optimistic though. He was never optimistic anymore. He knew it would be back just as the trailing whorls of a hurricane always follow the eye. But once he was there he was glad he was. He milled around with the others and felt more comradery with them than he had in years. He even gave his autograph to one of the new violinists who bubbled, "I've been wanting to ask you since I signed on. Your 'Violin Encores' was the first record I ever bought. I'd get it out whenever I felt like quitting. I still can't believe I'm going to be on the same stage with you."

When they were in their seats, Tobias saw the young man smile at him and winked back. Then as the curtain rose, he felt it—the pain in his side—like low rumbling thunder in the distance. He was able to ignore it through the first movement and hoped it wouldn't get worse. But it did. Like an ever increasing pack of rats gnawing at his stomach wall the pain grew. More sharp little teeth gathered; nibbling, biting at it, tearing off layers as if he were an onion. The violin nearly slipped from its perch, slick with sweat. By the final movement, Tobias didn't know if he was playing and didn't care. Everything whirled around. The music became a million bees buzzing in his ears: faster, faster. Then it happened. It was as if someone swept the rats aside and plunged a dagger into the space they once occupied. Tobias got up. He rushed to the wing nearest him, the knife twisting with each step. He collapsed against a wall, sank to a sitting position. His legs were stretched out in the aisle, his arms hung limply at his sides—a puppet with its strings cut. He began to cough up blood. Gobs of blood and mucus sprayed out of him in violent retches. He coughed up blood and choked on it, then coughed up more the way a half drowned man spits up water.

An attendant came running up to him but couldn't bring himself to touch Tobias. He stood for a moment looking at Theodore and the thick mat of blood on his white shirt. Tiny bubbles glistened in the lights. Tobias' face was drawn, white, wrinkled like a deflated balloon. His eyes twitched nervously in their sockets crying out, "Help me," for his whole body.



Another attendant came rushing toward them. He was stopped by the first who yelled, "Quick, get an ambulance! He's dying!"

Tobias tried to scream out, "I'm not dying!" But all he could move were his eyes. He tried to get up and run—run as fast as he could, but all he could move were his eyes. He was terrified. He began to pray. "God, don't let me die. I don't deserve to die. I can't die. Not yet. I haven't lived yet. I haven't lived." A tear dripped into the blood on his lap. He knew it was no use. He was dying. Nothing could save him. He began to curse. He damned his brothers, his father, the maestro, himself. He swore at himself most severely: at his miserable body. When he thought of his hand, he became angry. "It won't win," he told himself. "I'm not dying."

He tried to force himself up. His mind made the hand move, now it would control the legs. Each effort made him spew out more blood. He thrashed though he couldn't budge. More blood. Tobias saw himself as an animal with its foot caught in a trap, bleeding to death from the wound. No matter how hard he yanked, the foot wouldn't budge. And all his struggling was like trying to free himself by biting the foot off. The more he bit, the more he bled. There was no way out.

He prayed again. "I'll quit the symphony. Just let me live. I can't die. I can't no longer live. No longer be." Tobias' disciplined mind took over. "Stay calm," it said. "The ambulance will be here soon. Just stay calm. Think of happy things," his mind ordered, and like always it obeyed.

He thought of the things he enjoyed: butter on toast, huge balls of clouds in the sun, steady rain at night. But all that did was turn his terror into depression. The thought, "I'll no longer be," pushed him under. He fought back. He thought of his wife. How much he loved her. He could see her at home, lights shining through the kitchen window, where she always waited for him. He never had to knock. The door would open from inside as soon as his foot falls sounded on the steps. Light, warmth and love would wrap him and bring him inside. She would take his violin case, sit down straight across from him, and talk about the concert while she watched him eat. Somehow she always knew what he was in the mood for. Steak, spaghetti, fish, it didn't matter, she always knew.

"I'm sorry," he told the image he saw of her. He wished he hadn't acted so gruff the last few months, but it was too late now. He tried to see how he could have been that way. Then remembered. The hand. The music. Agonizing practice. "Did I bring all the misery on myself," he asked. "Wasn't there ever a time when it wasn't so?" Tobias felt his life ebb away a little more. "What difference does it make," he thought bitterly. "It'll be over soon." He slumped his head back against the wall to await his finish.

The orchestra was playing Tchaikowsky's sixth symphony—The Pathetic Symphony. The music was sweeping yet intimate, mournful yet tender: the way a mother feels when she says goodbye to her son and touches his uniform one last time.

Tobias listened. It was the first time in years he'd been a spectator. It was beautiful. He had forgotten how beautiful it was. It made him cry again. He remembered when the music was all in him and had to come out. He remembered how he had played with his emotions, not his fingers. How the violin had only been the needed medium to fill the air with his soul. To speak in a language none knew but all understood. And how he did so for others as well as himself. Now he heard the orchestra, his orchestra, do the same.

It filled Tobias with a sense of something vast and more powerful than anything on earth. He felt himself stretch out and expand like a tiny drop of dye till he reached all edges of the pool. He could feel others come out of their bodies also, spread and mix like so many vapors till they became infinite while remaining complete.

The orchestra was to entrance now. The strings were weak. Tobias's mind smiled for the lips that wouldn't move. He began to think. "Is this what life itself is? A medium just like music?" When he asked himself this, it suddenly became foolish to be afraid or depressed. The pain stopped. He felt relaxed. He closed his eyes and let the sounds lift him as they used to.

A siren screamed in the alley behind the buildings. Tobias heard the clammer of a stretcher being banged through a far away door. In a calm voice he asked to die bathed in the sounds of his symphony, his world, and not be carried out to the antiseptic one. "Let my wife's prayer be answered," he thought.

And it was.

The last thing Tobias's mind saw was the conductor prompt the orchestra to fill in for the missing violin. But it was no use. The world was weak one violin and always would be.

STEVE TOMASULA



Mirror

It has the color of a gray filing cabinet on its back, and on its front are all the colors of the world. On its side it is the palest blue, like the color of toilet water when it is time to buy some more Tidy Bowl. It is a small square, the size of a graham cracker in length, width, and height. It is as smooth and slippery as a brand new bathtub. It tells of unreal life and a backwards world, though it is always honest. It is often looked at, but never really observed. It and its kind know the secret to infinity.



BAMBI HELD

Dork From Ork

It was a nice, late summer day, just right to take a hike. (Seriously) So I got everything ready, and set off into the wilderness.

I had been hiking for only about ten minutes, when I saw a weird-looking thing, something like a giant cork. Curious, I went over to the lake where it was. I suddenly gave an ear-splitting scream when I heard a loud bang, and then a man coming out of the "cork."

"Snork!" said the man. When he realized that I was staring at him as if he was some kind of idiot, he finally said, "Whoops! Wrong planet! Hi!"

"Hi!" I said. "Wh-where did you come from?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Dork, I come from Ork, and I came on my big fat cork," he said.

"Yeah, I can see that," I said. It was only obvious.

Then after a long pause, Dork said, "Well, I guess you're wondering what a nice pork like me is doing in a cork!"

"A nice what?" I asked.

"Oh, dorky me! I keep talking in bork! I meant man. You Earthlings sure do have a dorky way of talking! Nothing rhymes," he said.

Then he chattered on some more. "See, you probably think I come from another planet. Well, I do, in a way. I come from a land under this lake. A cork is good to use because I can just plop myself on and I float to the top. See, I'll just dem—"

"Yeah, yeah, I know. You don't have to show me," I boringly said. "What did you come to Earth for, anyway?" I asked.

"Well, I don't know. Something to keep me busy, I guess," he answered.

"Oh," I said. How interesting, I thought.

Then, all of a sudden, he asked, "Do you think you could meet me here tomorrow at the same nork, I mean time?"

"Yeah. Why?" I questioned.

"Because I want to learn about Earth, and the Earthlings, and maybe you could teach me to be like an Earthling so that I could come up here and live with Earthlings," he exclaimed.

"Yeah, maybe," I said. I knew it would be a long time before he would learn how to be an Earthling when I saw him do some kind of crazy dance, sort of like a barefoot person on hot coal, then mumble some funny words, if that's what you want to call them.

"Bye!" I yelled.

"Snowk!" he yelled back. "Oh, I forgot to tell you, I learned something already: Earthlings say 'yeah' a lot. Well, snork again!"

"Bye, again!" I yelled as I waved.

LISA ZURAWSKI



DREAMS

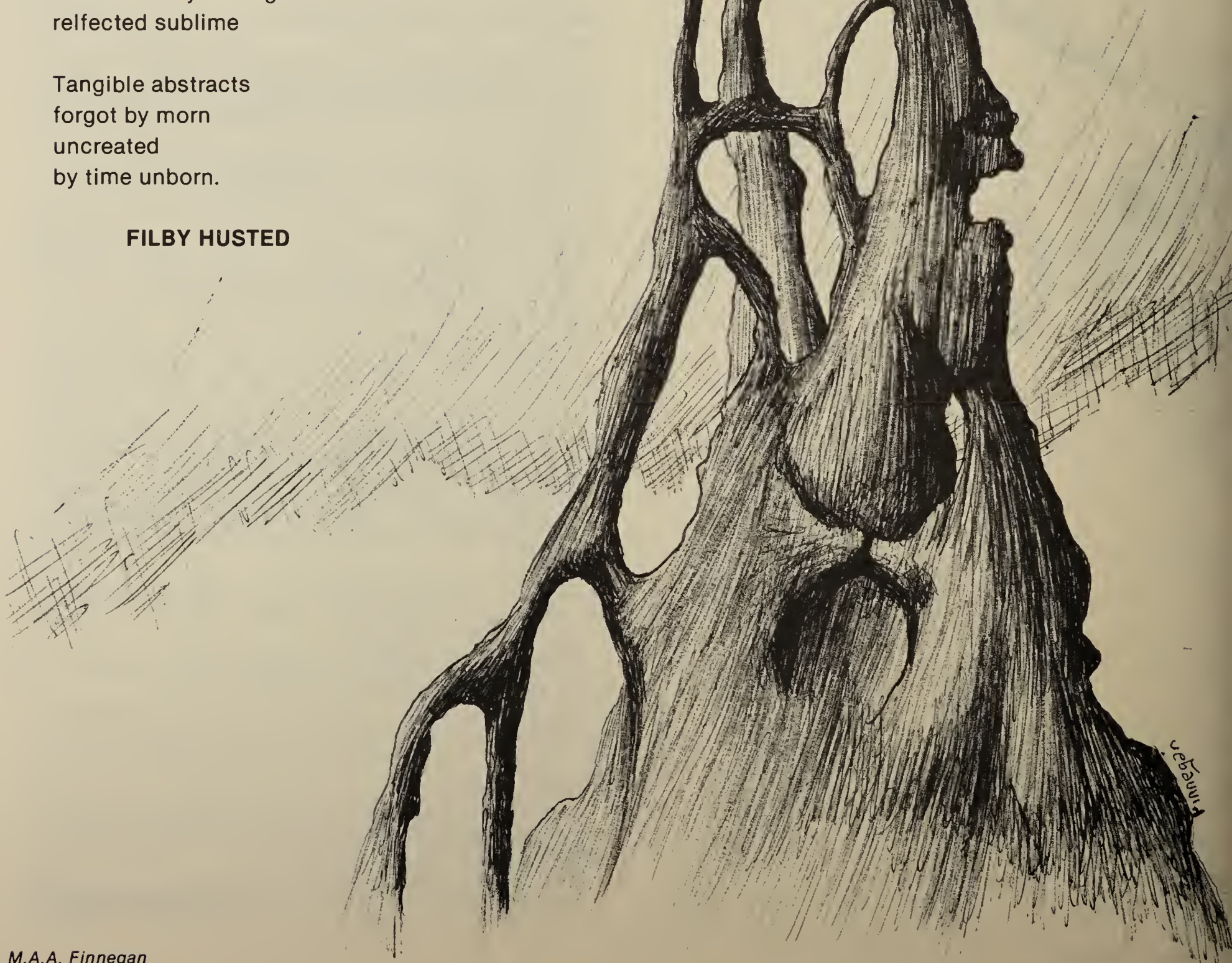
Infinite Sorcery
could never conjure
realistic qualities
that dreams allure.

Merlin's wisdom
and Gandalf's skill
never equate
nocturnal's surreal

Form and phrases
contrived in mind
conscience yearnings
reflected sublime

Tangible abstracts
forgot by morn
uncreated
by time unborn.

FILBY HUSTED



THE CYNIC

Niceness
screens an
edge of steel.

What looks
one way,
nightly acts another.

Will you be fool and
nobly
null your profit

because it betrays the
voucher you swore?
Learn to bend,

collude,
defraud, and
circumvent.

All those who
cling to
modes of truth

assert a merely
private passion.
Deceit's the height of fashion!

MICHAEL KULYCKY

OH AMERICA, WHEN YOU AND I WERE YOUNG

—The kiss was a warm and sincere one,
full of passionate love and tenderness,
certainly, but also functional. . . .It could
allow her to pretend she did not know
I was undressing her.—

Luigi Barzini

I

and the Lady on Liberty Island still made sense.
And street football was our yougurt
and love was a '57 Chevy groaning a hard
day's night, and puff the magic dragon, and surfer's girl.
And poems were watermelons and our Camelots
crashed: in the fall of Kennedy's death
and we suddenly grew bald.

II

Oh America, when The Graduate made us laugh
and fraternities greened the College,
and panty raids and moonings streaked to moratoriums
(where a freak lit Buddhism on our campus
with only one match, where only one black
left the chapel to throwup uncle tom).
When flowers and beards became lovers and peacegivers;
when Hair and Chicago convened, to elect
JC Superstar. (Oh, Calcutta!)

III

Oh America, when we were not moviegoers
mashed jawed godfathered omened,
greased stoned and Catch-22'ed. When we were
not naderized, baileycised nixorcized kennedyzed
wallacized reganized parked and mooned.
When we were not israelized
cubacized russianized chinasized egyptized.
When we were not
lionized burglarized puritanized sanitized
dietized mediacized neutronized. Oh America,
when you and I grow
old with Little Big Man at Wounded-Knee,
with QB VII and Jane Pittman. With Kunta Kinte
Oh America, when you and I grow. Oh America,
when you and I. Oh America, when you and.
Oh America, when you. Oh America. Oh America,
O.

ANFONATO PIAZZA NICOLAI

FOOTNOTE: With gratitude to Luigi Barzini for the poem's title; even more, for the inspiration.

PANEGYRIC: FOR WOMAN

Painted lady
burning bright
'neath the lampposts
of the night

I envy you your brazen halo
Madonna of the Streets,
impregnable in your chiseled marble perfection:
gilt, a preservative
against corrosion of the spirit,
the smoke of your cigarettes,
incense at your shrine.

Welcome home, Amelia Earhart.
They say you were lost
somewhere over the Pacific
but if I believed that
I would have to believe in
Doris Day and sugar
and spice and everything
when I know that you
were simply exhilarated
by your freedom and forgot
to come down to earth.

Audacious, Boadicea,
rebel warrior-queen,
to challenge pater-familial Rome.
Audacious
to be a warrior
to be a rebel
but the biggest affront?
to be a queen.

You are beautiful, Babe,
in your supple strength;
your liquid mass of muscle
undulates in the sun
with a Dionysian delight
in being alive in your body,
a celebrant in the revelry
of activity.

You glow, Maria Sklodowska;
your hands, so deft in the laboratory
and your face, electric
with the aura of a Kirlian photograph.
Neither radium, nor intellect
can be confined in a drawer.

What have you done, Woman,
(preconceptually groomed
for erudite
as well as erotic
prostitution)
to destroy the fragile
male-egotistical presumption
that procreation is woman's only creative urge?
'Whither hast thou gone, Caia?'

DENISE SOBILO

Before

*I must go home
Before dark
Before the mist
Envelopes me.*

*I must leave
Before shadows float
To disturb
The sharp images,
And awareness
Dims.*

*Before the hibernating
Inner wild one
Is awakened.*

*Before
I become
Too much less.*

PEARL MOSWIN

THE THESPIANSECT

I know a fly.
As an actor he's jolly good,
He's passed many a screen test
tougher than Hollywood.

CHARLES H. BOYD



CHINESE RESTAURANT

Like figures embroidered on a silk screen,
they sit stiffly on teak chairs,
old friends it seems,
at this their last meeting.

What is unsaid lingers on the table
in tea pot vapors growing cold.

They are two mirrors facing each other,
forever repeating images
and mistakes.

So clumsy with chopsticks,
too proud to ask for forks,
they leave behind the crumbs
of cookies that made promises.

Outside in the garden
a dynasty of leaves glistens
like jade,
and moths are drawn
irresistibly
to paper lanterns.

JOHN BOLINGER

INNOCENT CHILD

Out of wound a babe emerged—innocence
 Babe emerged, baby surged, baby's mind grows
 Baby's mind
 Baby's soul
 Sucked up/Fucked up
 Thrown down the hole
 Baby's mind, baby's soul, baby's body
 Complete and whole
 Holy guidance
 Guides through childhood
 through mild/hood
 through solitude
 solitude
 solitude

Solid tunes carry babe away through time
 Rhymes flow now throughout
 The mouth/the mind
 Unwind mind music
 Unwind time music
 Written and within
 Some hide/some glide
 Some roll beneath the ball of ink
 While those inside await release
 Release



Please cease to hold the currents back
 Rushing with such force
 Bearing down/breaking down
 Dams
 Holding back the water

 I see the cracks
 They slowly grow
 Someday soon—the hole grows larger
 With every passing moment of time
 Grows larger
 With every passing rhyme
 In time-gushing forth
 Flooding
 Filling
 No more restraints
 No more complaints
 The water will encompass me
 And in that day, baby free
 Baby see
 Baby leave society
 Vacation in eternity
 Only goal pure quality
 That which completes the trinity
 That which is infinity
 That which is serenity
 The trinity: Mind
 Matter
 Quality
 They all remain undefined
 Perhaps because they're unrefined
 Untouched by man's decaying hands
 They grow/flow
 Sow seeds of thought
 Throw shadows on all who fought for hate
 far too late to nourish it
 time that we discourage it
 realize we
 we defecate hate
 our fate
 so late
 too late
 late night muggers roam
 while late night sluggers groan

EDWIN J. CARLSON

Distant high dancing through the jonquil word we heard.
It may be them.
Whisper wind shadows the glass,
Awake at last, like a lover.
The wounds so fresh, you can still taste the blood.
So you pull out.
Away you run like a streaming flame,
Overpowering the gears.
And flightless birds stare you down
Down onto sinking ghost ships on the ocean.
So you pull out.
Mistral breeze on polished black.
It soothes your blisters,
And swells in your ears as I shoot electric waves from my fingertips.
And you laugh because no one told you red could never be blue.
So you pull out.
And you take helpless flight,
To nowhere.
When my firewood burns away,
All knowing, all seeing;
It cracks to other forms.
In other worlds, away from the green.
And you laugh because no one told you that never was forever.

LISA MISH

The Way It Is

*I dream of you caressing me,
Your body pouring itself over mine
Like the lazy stroking
Of warm fur or long hair.
I dream of the glow
That warms like wax
Melting me into something
Not me, all me, forming and formless,
Full, flooded, flowing—

Suddenly,
Your key bites the lock
And dreaming snaps!*

PAT POTEL

ALL'S FAIR?

It was the eve of the Annual Interplanetary Registration of Intelligent Species and Communicative Droids. Cooperative Universal Law stated that all said non-Barbarian categorical beings were to return to their planet of birth, cloning, or manufacture each year, so that the Acumen Council could maintain an accurate census of all able-bodied constituents of the Cause in case of another Great Revolution. Rumor had it that the Barbarian Faction, which reigned in the vast Darkcold Sector of the Known Universe, had increased markedly in population, due to excessive cloning and reproduction. Thus, this year's shuttleship journey from the planet Orion of the Hope Sector to the planet Earth of the Mother Sector was a tense one. Most droids had requested that they be disconnected for the duration of the trip, so as to avoid excessive stress on their energy packs (the presence of high-strung living creatures tended to make them prone to miscalculations and general dysfunction). They weren't stupid; they knew as well as the rest of us that war was at hand again.

I turned to the passenger on my right and was duly astonished by a magnificent specimen of masculinity—he had wavy silver hair; a sharp, square chin, occupied by just a respectable hint of five-o'clock shadow; thick, wiry, black eyebrows that emphasized the striking, icy-blue, reflective pools which were his eyes; and a finely chiseled proboscis, neither too flat nor too pointed, but just the right proportion in accordance with the rest of his features. His perfectly toned torso tapered from broad, muscular shoulders and arms down to a trim, flat stomach, sheltered by his big, slightly calloused, but neatly manicured (and ringless) hands.

I was stunned. If ever there was a love at first sight, this was it. If ever there was needed an example of an Adonis, it could be found in this man. He was the man of my dreams! It was imperative that I get to know him. I decided the best way to accomplish my goal was to start a conversation with him.

"How long did you live in the Mother Sector?" I figured this was as good an opening as anything, but apparently, he didn't. He just stared into space, not noticing me or anything else

around him. Maybe the Mother Sector stirred ill memories in him—I decided to change the subject.

"Do you think there's going to be another Revolution?" Still no reply—no movement. Possibly the impending war instilled him with apprehension. Perhaps if I calmed his fears, we could get on with the intended romance.

"We'll make short work of those Barbarians, just like we did in the Year of Severance. The Cause is the most powerful force in the Known Universe. Besides, I've heard that the whole Ruffian Partition of Darkcold has been wiped out by the Sequestrian Plague. That should make it a bit easier, don't you think?" Still no answer came, and I was becoming heartbroken and desperate. One last idea came to me as I tapped him on the shoulder. Maybe he was hard of hearing.

"EXCUSE ME!" I bellowed, "I AM BAMBI OF THE QUANTUM PARTITION ON THE PLANET ORION! WHOM DO I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF ADDRESSING?"

With that, I received a tap on my own shoulder from the person occupying the seat behind me. I turned around to greet, a laughing, portly gentleman, about the same age my father would have been, had he not been destroyed in the first Revolution by Tumulo, General of the Barbarian Troops.

"Sorry to interrupt you, but I am the owner of the sidekick you are trying to have the pleasure of addressing, there. He's turned off, at the moment. He's really a good chap—almost human, at times. I'll turn him on for you, if you like."

"He. . . he's a droid?" I was crushed.

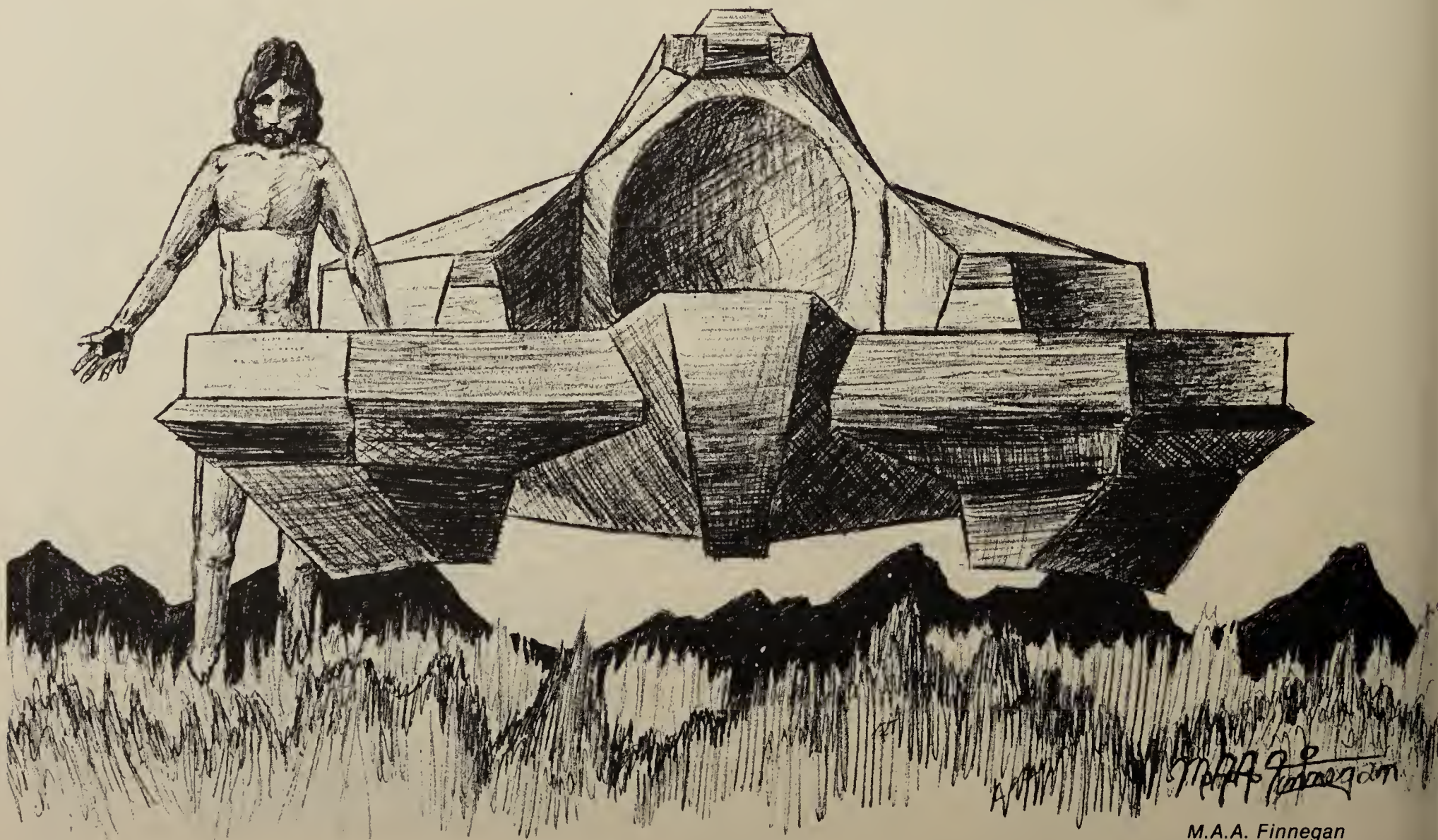
"Oh, he's much more than a droid—he's my friend. Here, I'll turn him on and show you. . ."

"No! No, please," I said abruptly, "let him rest. He looks so. . . so peaceful there. I wouldn't want to bother him on such a long trip. Maybe. . . maybe later," I uttered disconcertedly.

"As you wish," answered the gentleman, "but I believe you already understand what I mean when I tell you he is more than just a droid. . ."

With this, I turned around and sank back into the cushion of my seat. "Job. . .," I thought, staring at the figure on my right. "Job. . . more than just a droid. . ."

BAMBI HELD



PROSE FRAGMENTS IN A CIGAR BOX

Aunt Vie had blue mirrors in her house
and a mohair sofa with her imprint on the center cushion.

I used to stay over on Saturday nights
to make puppets with Uncle Bill's socks
and drink Ovaltine from a Captain Video space mug.

A Christmas ornament sent from France by Uncle Bill
arrived broken in 1941.
The pieces stay in a Dutch Masters box on the mantle.
I wonder how it must have looked once.

On summer evenings Aunt Vie would
Drop **Reader's Digest** down the stairwell
at Benny, her cocker spaniel,
when he wouldn't stop barking at the crickets.

There is a photo (double exposure) of her and Benny and me
on a porch swing near lilac bushes not in bloom.

There are two of me pressed together
from different times.

One of me is lost forever,

but the other imagines still
how broken pieces may yet fit together

into some bright star at the top of a tree

for all Decembers that remain.

JOHN BOLINGER

Something I Never Saw

One day I was walking to school and I fell into a hole. Something touched me and said, "How did you get here?"

I said, "I fell in a hole and landed here."

"I would like you to meet my friend."

Just then a little heart-shaped creature flew out from behind some curtains. Then she said, "This is the ghost of Valentine's Day."

"Hello", said the heart-shaped creature, "What are you doing here?"

"I fell in that hole and landed here, I really would like to go to school."

"Okay, but you must not tell anyone about me."

"Okay," I promised.

"Close your eyes and count to twenty out loud." Soon I was on my way to school and never even knew I met the creature.

BARBARA NEELY

Roller Coaster Ride

The clicking of the chain that slowly inched the roller coaster to the top of the world, echoed like a time bomb in my head. I stole a glance at the blue sky and wondered for a split second if I could really grab on to the cloud floating above my head and just watch my would-be adventure from a bird's eye view. My fantasies were quickly erased as I realized the ticking of the time bomb had ceased, and it was now time to explode. All the colors that formerly had distinct shapes and sizes now melted together before my eyes in a rushing cavalcade of bright and light, each color brighter than the one next to it. An inner claw clenched at my stomach to keep it within my body as I reached the bottom of the first hill, and my tail end was rather stunned that the rest of me was more occupied with the vacuuming sound in my ears than with the problem of how to avoid the pain of a crash landing. With scarcely enough time to draw a fresh breath, I was headed toward the experience of a sharp right turn on the track. While my body violently snapped to the right and my head jerked in the opposite direction, my brain forgot which way it was really supposed to go, so it kept on moving forward. Before I realized that, technically, I should have fallen to the ground below me, my brain had run back to my head, and my head was back in the same direction the rest of my body was moving. A deathly scream from within the depths of my soul fused my wayward capacities back together again, as I halfway prepared myself for a few more sessions of ups, downs, twists and turns, and imaginary falls, and just when I thought I was getting used to it all, the roller coaster came to a slow halt. I eased myself out of my tiny vehicle as each of my feet gingerly touched the solid earth they were accustomed to. For once, I was sure I was not going to fall, even though my head was spinning to the right and the contents of my stomach were spinning to the left, and with each cautious step my legs bent like rubber beneath me. The roller coaster ride was over.

BAMBI HELD

Mystery of the Cellar

It was February 13, 1978. John was in his room getting ready for bed. He was looking out his window when he heard a scream. John didn't know what to do so he ran to a phone but the line was dead. John went for his revolver, loaded it, and went slowly downstairs to where he heard the scream.

It was in the darkest part of the basement. John went to fix the fusebox when something grabbed him. It was his sister, Carol. She had a knife in her hand. Carol said, "I heard the scream also. I was in the kitchen making a sandwich. Do you think it could be a murderer," asked Carol. "Where's Jim and Mary?" said Carol.

"I don't know," said John.

Then, there it was, a shadow. It was too big to be an animal and didn't look like a person. John and Carol turned around—there was another shadow. They were surrounded. John said, "Go after the one behind us if it doesn't stop when I say 'halt or I'll shoot.' Get him, sis, they won't stop."

"Fire your gun, John!" said Carol.

"What, it's me—your brother Jim and sister-in-law Mary."

"Did you hear the scream?" asked Carol.

"Yes, it was me," said Mary. "The electricity went out and we came down to fix the fuse when I almost fell down the stairs. Sorry if I woke you," Mary said.

MICHAEL SHAFFER

against the establishment

*i wish i had a cricket;
i'd teach him how to picket.
and if i got a ticket
i'd tell 'em where to sticket.*

NANCY NIEDERMAYER



Barkiter and Gorgonzola

There was a man named Barkiter who was a dog trainer and he loved television, and his favorite show was Gorgonzola. But the monster kept on disappearing into thin air. So he prayed to the god of television, Video.

Video answered him by telling him you will have to take all his pizza away. Gorgonzola has to eat pizza to become invisible. He prayed again, and asked how he could do this.

Video answered by telling him to get his most ferocious dogs and I will tell you what to do. So he got a couple of different, ferocious dogs and the god told him to take some sand and sprinkle it on the dogs. So he did, and the two dogs become one with two heads and twice the size of one. There was one problem—he forgot he was allergic to pizza.

Next, he told him the way to the monster's hideout and to ride on Cyprus, the two-headed dog. He was also told it would be a long journey. The monster lived in the Rocky Mountains.

It was a very long journey. He ran into about everything except the Marines and the Navy.

When he got to the Rocky Mountains, Barkiter didn't just find him right off because the mountains were a large area.

So he was lucky because he had brought a compact television so he could pray to Video where he was, because you could only talk to him by television.

Video answered him by telling him he would show the way by television. But he just remembered that he was allergic to pizza, so he told Video his problem and Video told him to walk till the monster's next program and then sneak in with your dog Cyprus and have him eat the pizza.

So they did what he told them and they almost didn't make it.

When they got home, Video told him to sprinkle some dirt on them and he did, and they became the same dog but mixed together, and that is how there are mixed breeds.

The End

MATT PENDLEY

The Denim Ghost

I gazed at them:
hanging stiffly
in the moonlight,
with denim sleeves
outstretched—
no longer filled
with brawny arms
that held me close,
comforting me
for years—
Then, I bravely
plucked them from
the icy line,
renewing the cold, stiff
touch of death.

ETHEL SIMIANER

I was safe
there.

Warm, secure—
a womb.
I could not move
my legs
enough to run
and did not try
too hard—
afraid.

A quiet fear. . .
I smiled
and watched
as others
walked and breathed
and sometimes
cried, outside.

SUE PANTHER

THE WALK-OUT

Just when you think it's gone,
Buried forever and ever,
Along comes someone
To unlock your guts
And peep into the keyhole
Of your brain.

So you try to hide it deeper,
This need, this want
As wide as an ocean,
Fueling the hell you carry
With each dig,
Avoiding the sin of eyes
Like knots carried on a nun.

And all the time
You know it's not the love,
The love that opens itself
As simple as Hello,
But the all-of-a-sudden loneliness
From wanting to keep
One foot stuck in the door
When all the world is bidding
To push it shut.

GARY CZERWINSKI

*When the wind turns round
And the branches burst their bark
The sun dips to kiss
Brown breasted hills of April
You will come again to me*

JO STOFFREGEN



Cliff Alley

His fishing lures still deck the workshop wall;
Clothes hang motionless in the spare closet.
She still, once in a while,
Puts coffee on at four p.m.
And she cries all during May.

B.E. BALOG

A Surreal Afternoon

At one o'clock Sammy Wilson and his pretty lady friend entered the air-conditioned lobby of the Hotel Sheraton, the most exclusive hotel on the Isle of St. Thomas.

Sammy strode across the pillow thick carpet with arrogant finesse. He was arrogant, but he had a crude finesse of sorts. To someone seeing Sammy for the first time the impression was immediate: he appeared to be a man that had made his way over from the bad side of town and finally made good—and was damn proud of it. He carried himself well for a man of fifty-two, like a well-aged prizefighter that had just knocked out a younger opponent in the third round.

The pretty baby that hung on his arm was taller than he was and half his age. She claimed to be a fashion model “in between” assignments. She looked like a model straight out of *Vogue* magazine, but acted like a secretary straight from Des Moines. She was good for the ego, besides, she jumped at the chance to escape the raging Midwest winter. She hardly knew Sammy, but she didn't put up a big stink about going. A fancy trip couldn't be passed by.

Sammy called out everyone's name. He prided himself on remembering names, places, birthdays; anything that would make a person remember Sammy Wilson. The hotel staff classified Sammy as a “regular” guest and treated him with special consideration. He was liked and catered to by the staff. He also tipped 20%.

“How ya doing’, Sheldone?” yelled Sammy.

“Hey, Jerzy, you old Jew, what's up? Just get in?”

Sammy greeted all of the other “regulars” with that slightly nasal South Chicago dialect of his. He yelled, waved, or back-slapped until he was sure he'd made the rounds and been heard or seen by everyone.

The blue-blooded, menopausal, rich ladies sniffed and snorted in disgust at his crudeness. Sammy didn't notice. The blue-haired old ladies clutched their husbands' limp arms a little tighter. The husbands smiled stiff, proper smiles that exuded so much charm and sincerity. The whispers began. The ladies had something to live for: GOSSIP.

“I wonder who the girl is this year. She's prettier than the one he had last year,” Mrs. Lincolnshire said as she nudged Mrs. Wainwright.

“I imagine she's one of those girls,” Mrs. Strater emphasized the word “those” as she nodded to Mrs. Pomroy. Mrs. Pomroy looked as though she would throw up.

“Well, Randolph, do you think the old boy is doing as well as he appears, or do you think he's giving us a show?” Mr. Willcox asked Mr. Kish.

“He's doing better than that, Robert. I understand from a source that he made a killing on that land deal next to the Hancock Center. Involved the mayor and several aldermen from what I hear. He may be crude and most certainly not our breed, but he's M-O-N-E-Y with a capital ‘M’.”

Sammy Wilson had arrived.

Upstairs in the Executive Suite everything was perfect as usual. Yellow roses saluted Sammy with thick waves of perfume that made him sick to his stomach. They reminded him of pus—or mucus. He didn't know which, all he knew is that he didn't like them. The bell captain apologized profusely as he removed the flowers from the rooms. Sammy was grateful, so grateful that he tossed the embarrassed man a crumpled twenty as he shut the door.

“Oh, Sammy,” gushed the pretty baby. “This is absolutely the most prettiest place I've ever seen. It's so—so heavenly. Yes, that's what it is. It's like heaven. Why, Sammy, it's so gorgeous I could just die.”

“Yeah, it's O.K. Got me the best place in the whole damn joint. It's costin' me plenty. But what the hell, I've got it, so why not spend it?”

“Sammy, you promised me that you wouldn't curse anymore. You even crossed your heart. I'm not used to that kind of language and I don't like it. I'm not a tramp, so don't talk like that around me.”

Pretty baby bent over a little and gave Sammy a peck on his cheek. The gesture reminded him of his sister when he was a kid. She always kissed him like that after she'd finished knocking the hell out of him.



Sammy put his things away. Pretty baby sat in the adjoining room and read the *National Enquirer* and chewed a stick of Juicy Fruit.

“Sammy, what time is it?”

“Two-thirty. Ya' got someplace to be or something?”

“No, I'm not going anywhere. I was just wondering what was on television,” she called back.

Sammy sighed and shook his head.

“How in the hell can a person come all the way down here from Chicago, in the middle of the worst winter in history, no less, and want to sit around on their white ass and watch a bunch of fags on those stupid soap operas.”

Sammy didn't say it loud enough to drown the T.V. blaring in the next room. He threw the rest of his shorts into the dresser in a heap and slipped on a fresh sports jacket.

“I'm heading downstairs. Do you want to come?” he asked.

Pretty baby didn't hear him, or she pretended not to. She was glued to the set.

Sammy slammed the door and tromped down the hall, muttering to himself. A woman with big knockers thought she had been insulted when Sammy stormed past and said, “dumb bitch” under his breath.

Downstairs he stopped at the half-filled lounge for a drink. He ordered a tall glass of Perrier and a slice of lime. He'd heard somewhere that it was the popular drink that all the cultivated rich folk liked to swill so much. He knocked back the drink in two swallows and wasn't impressed. He had another. He sipped it this time, thinking that it might taste better the second time around. It tasted just as bad as the first one. Sammy finished the glass, slammed the empty glass on the marble-topped bar and walked toward the beach.



Cliff Alley

Sammy walked onto the white sand and surveyed what lay before him: a calm, green sea topped by a blue-gray sky that was void of clouds. To his right, the beach extended itself in a gentle radius for as far as he could see; to his left, the beach followed a more irregular pattern, becoming disjointed with rock formations and desultory beachhouses.

There were few people on the beach. Sammy felt more at ease. Of the people reclining on the sand he could only recall vague pictures of beached whales. The old ladies and old men lying there in their flabby, worn-out, chalk-white bodies made him think of that.

Sammy walked past the gentle vacationers, being very careful not to disturb them or engage them in banal conversation. He knew he was in a foul mood and didn't care to see or talk to a soul. He wanted to be alone for awhile.

The sun was warm and intoxicating. Its rays worked on him like opium. It eased his muddled thoughts and emotions and warmed his soul. Sammy was happy to have the sun all to himself, even if it was only for a short time.

He walked along the deserted beach, stopping to admire the seagulls in flight or sand patterns. The main beach was far in the distance now. Up ahead he noticed two young women lying on their bellies sunbathing. They were tanned and wonderfully naked. He dared not to go near them. They were oblivious to the intruder. Sammy kept his distance as he walked on. He didn't say a word. Soon they were far away.

The sun seemed warmer with each step. He sat down in the sand with a loud sigh. Leaning back on his elbows he cocked his head so his face pointed skyward.

"Soak it all in, joker. It's the only thing that's free in this life," he said in a tremulous voice.

He repeated the phrase several more times as if to convince himself of its truth. He leaned back until he was flat on his back. He took deep, even breaths, keeping in cadence with the licking waves. It didn't take long for him to fall asleep.

The dreams came quick and hard, leaving as quickly as they appeared. They were surreal dreams full of abstract images, darting back and forth at a vertiginous pace. Blasts of noise and colors jerked his subconscious into a stupor. They were dreams that only a troubled man could have.

"Hello. Anybody home?"

Sammy jumped out of his dream world and bolted upright. He looking up into penetrating, almond eyes.

"Hello, again. I didn't realize you were asleep. I saw you laid out and thought you'd passed out or worse," the voice came from one of the sunbathers he'd passed. She was alone and stood before him totally naked. It took Sammy a second to come to his senses.

"Hello, yourself," he replied. "I was dozing a little. Must be the sun. It's warm, too warm."

She was tall, slender, and very pretty. She looked to be American.

"May I sit down?" she asked.

"Sure, go ahead," Sammy motioned to her. "I noticed you and your friend down the way as I was walking. I hope I didn't bother you two. Tell me, is nude sunbathing allowed around here?"

"You're silly," she smiled, showing two rows of perfect, white teeth. She spread a small beach towel on the sand and dropped gracefully down onto it. Sitting cross-legged opposite him, her smooth back faced the sea. Sculpture in baby oil.

"It's still illegal to go sunbathing in the buff, for sure. But we're far enough out so nobody can see us. You know, you sound like a silly-assed tourist from the Midwest. Are you? I bet you are. I should know. I'm from Chicago. You want to know something else? I bet you're down here prancing about like all the other fancy-dressed, silly-assed tourists. You think you're different from all the others. Right? Wrong, you're down here every year to impress people that you couldn't give three shits about. Am I right?"

Sammy squirmed as he listed to the woman. He wanted to talk about something—anything other than what he was hearing. He couldn't meet her steel-eyed stare. Finally, he said, "Looks like you've got quite a tan."

"I always try to look my best, tourist," she said tersely. She continued her penetrating stare as she went on. "I've really boggled your feeble mind, haven't I? I see prissy big-shots just like you all over this beach. You probably shelled out some big bucks just to come down here to play the role of Big Daddy, instead of being really on the ball and hanging on to your dirty money."

He didn't like the way she spit out the name Big Daddy. It sounded like an insult. Yet, he didn't know why he just sat there and took it all in the face. Maybe she was on something and didn't know what she was saying, he thought.

"You want to know something else, Mr. Tourist? I'll just bet you've got a pretty, but slightly dozy, little filly parked in a big, fancy hotel, playing you for the biggest sucker ever created on God's wonderful earth. She's got you so balled up that you think you're eternally in love with her. I guess that's as good as an excuse as any. You want to know how I'm so smart? I'll tell you with one word: Experience. I used to be one of those dumb broads that you rich boys liked to parade around with so much. That's how I got my one-way ticket to this place. Except I got smart in a hurry and dumped the jerk I was with. You kind of remind me of him. That was three years ago."

Sammy squirmed a little more with each word. "Get up and just walk away, Sammy," he thought to himself. But he knew she was right. She knew him and his type. She had him in a corner.

"You want a cheap thrill, tourist?" she asked.

"What? What are you talking about?" His face looked consternated.

"Oh, c'mon, tourist. You know exactly what I'm talking about. You're a bright boy, aren't you. Come on. Try me. I'm the best. I've had lots of practice. I've got the cure for whatever ails you. C'mon, try me," she laughed as she said it.

"Try you for what? What do you want me to try?"

"Tourist, for a bigshot like yourself, you sure are a slow study."

She reached behind her back and undid her hair. It fell in a blonde cascade over her tanned shoulders onto her firm

breasts. Her body glistened with baby oil. She looked slick.

She taunted him, "I thought a big boy like you wouldn't be such a silly-ass. Come on. Do me. Do me, right here, right now. Hurry up, tourist, I haven't got all day for you to catch on to what I'm saying."

Leaning back on her elbows she uncrossed her long legs, flexing them a little. The vise was ready. She closed her eyes and aimed her face up to the sky.

He looked at her bronzed, youthful body. The slender, yet strong legs invited him. Her flat stomach made her breasts seem too large for her lithe body. Her form was obscene, yet sensual, like a statue of a reclining woman he'd seen one Sunday afternoon at the Art Institute. The memory of that cool and lifeless statue, coupled with the warm form that lay before him, made him want the sunbather even more than he realized. It was unbearable: his body tingled with the sensation of a million ants scurrying over his naked body.

He looked all around. No one was in sight.

"Ah, what the hell!"

She moaned as he laid into her with an explosion of physical tension fueled by that endless, all consuming need to prove himself superior to any human, whether it be man or woman.

The frenzy of bodies roared on for several minutes. Once the spasm ended Sammy rolled over on his back in complete exhaustion. The woman sat up and scowled at his lumpy body with contempt. She said nothing. She fixed her hair and brushed sand from her back and legs. It was no easy chore brushing sand off of baby oil. She breathed easily as she did it, as if nothing had happened. Sammy breathed hard and fast, trying to suck all of the air in the world into his screaming lungs.

"You're a good baby," she said.

Sammy didn't reply. He couldn't catch his breath.

The woman sat still for several minutes. Finally, she spoke, "Do me a big favor, Mr. Big Shot Tourist. Be a pretty girl and call me a name—any name you can think of. It'll be fun."

Sammy had now caught his breath but was still weak. He sat up with a great effort, squinting at her with tired eyes.

"What do you want to be called? Is this some sort of a game or what?"

"Sure, it's a game. I call it the name-game. It can be a lot of fun if you know how to play it. Anyone can play, especially bright boys like yourself."

"I don't feel like playing any silly games. The fun's over. I'll give you money, anything you want."

"I don't want your lousy money. I don't want anything of yours. And you'll play the game alright. Let's begin. What do people of your so-called social position call a woman like me?" she asked mockingly.

"I'll tell you what we call women of your class: you're scum, a slut."

"Hey, that's very good for the first try. That's very original, quite innovative. But I expected something a little more in keeping with your social status. I thought you'd say something like strumpet or trull. That sounds much more dignified. It's also more creative. You fooled me, tourist. I assumed you were a real bright boy. I bet with a little practice you could come up with some zingers. Try again, tourist."

"Why don't you leave me alone, you bitch. That's what you are, a no-good bitch. You're crazy. . . you and your crazy game."

The woman was brutal. She smiled. "Mr. Tourist, you catch on quick. Your quickness amazes me. From looking at you, one'd never guess you'd be such a blazing intellectual. Such a facility of the spoken language is to be commended. I'm impressed."

Sammy sat erect. He couldn't believe what was happening.

"Call me a whore," commanded the woman.

"O.K., you're a whore. This game is boring me," his voice had a slight edge to it. "Why don't you take a hike."

The woman smiled and threw her pretty head back and let out a deep, menacing laugh. "You're a big dumb-ass, you know that? I'm sure you do. So you think this is a game? For the first time today you've said something that makes some sense. Sure, it's a game and you're the loser. What a dope. You'll always be a loser no matter how much money you pile up in your bank account. All of you rich farts are losers." She began to laugh that laugh of hers. "And the funny thing is that you clowns think you've got the world by the balls."

There was a loud silence. Sammy sat there dumbfounded. The other sunbather walked up to the couple. She'd seen all that had gone on. She was visibly upset. Her troubled face seemed incongruous with her beautifully shaped body. She was much smaller and fragile looking than her tall friend.

In a tiny voice the newcomer addressed the tall girl: "You've cheated on me. You deceiver, you. I trusted you and you cheated on me."

Sammy was confused by the scene being played before him. The newcomer began to cry. The tall woman stood up and put her arm around the small woman's shoulder. He kept silent.

"It wasn't anything," the tall one said.

"It sure didn't look like it was nothing, Charlie," the shorter sunbather shot back.

"Believe me, honey, I was just having some fun in the sun. He doesn't mean crap to me. You're the only one for me. This guy's a wimp, a wet noodle just like the rest of them. Why, I bet your little brother would be better than this bozo—and he's only thirteen. Please don't be mad at me. Please?" She was almost in tears now. She went on, "I swear it won't happen again. Please forgive me, won't you?"

The little one sniffed, "I forgive you, Charlie."

The two women walked away. Sammy focused his unbelieving eyes on the languid, sensual rhythm of their bodies as they strolled down the beach hand-in-hand. They were beautiful in their nakedness. The women stopped every so often to kiss long and passionately as they caressed one another. They laughed and clung to each other as lovers do in the early stages of romance. He watched them walk out of sight. He hung his weary head and shook it with dismay.

It was a long time before he moved. He felt much older than when he'd first started out on his little walk. The spinning in his head wouldn't give up. "It must be the heat," he said to himself as he rested his head on his hands.

It was much later than he thought as he glanced at his watch. In disgust he pulled the piece from his wrist, set it for several hours earlier than it really was and flung it into the sea.

Sammy yelled as he threw it, "So long, you worthless piece of junk. Like everything else you cost me a bundle but you're no damn good. I'm sick of it all!"

With that grand gesture he walked in the direction of the hotel, talking to himself as he trudged along the beach.

"This never really happened, did it?" he asked himself.

Any other time he would have had third, and even fourth thoughts about talking to himself. He would indulge himself today. Things like this don't happen everyday, he thought. It deserved a special conversation. Today's events were lewd, base, and not for real. He had to say something.

"And even if it did happen, which of course it did, so what? What's the big deal? Nobody knows what went on except me and those two whore-dogs. They won't tell. They wouldn't dare. Who'd believe them? Nobody, that's who. It's my word against theirs. They won't stand a chance of making me look like a fool—not a chance in hell. Prissy bitches!"

He tried to be as convincing to himself as he could. He didn't quite believe what he was feeding himself. It would take some time.

"Hold on there a second, old buddy," a faint, prodding voice began. It emerged from somewhere deep within him. The small voice sounded vaguely familiar, like an old chum talking to him for the first time in years. It startled him. He stopped abruptly as if to listen to a far-off sound in the darkness.

The new voice started again, "So you think you've figured it out. 'Got it tight' as you would say. Right? Wrong! Old friend, you've been found out and it's about time. The scam's over for Sammy Wilson. You're right about one thing, Sammy. They won't blab about what went on today. They don't have any reason to blab about it. There's nothing to tell, you jerk! You've been had. After all these years of screwing other people your turn finally came up. Except you got screwed in such a way that all of your money couldn't help you. Kind of scary, isn't it? Look at it this way, it sure was a change of pace, wasn't it?"

The voice faded. Sammy strained to hear it.

"So long, Sammy. You've done it all and then some. But it's finally caught up with you. Never fear, my intrepid friend, life will go on once you take a hot bath and take a nap. One last bit of advice: next time you decide to take a walk on the beach why don't you bring a friend."

The voice broke off. It would never return again. Sammy stood erect, listening. He shook all over. With a jolt of a freshly awakened consciousness, Sammy spat with a violent motion. All he could think to say was, "bullshit!"

Sammy Wilson had returned.

JAMES PENN

CLOUDS

*Are they
saints peering
down from the
heavens?*

*Are they castaways from
an island of
the seas of
heaven?*

*Are they wisps
of old ships'
masts?*

*Are they feathers from
birds of the
past?*

*Are they ghosts of people
from a long lost
time?*

DAVE LEGG

FOUNTAIN HEAD

I cannot remember all she said;
Words ebb away in the tides of time,
But when I am pressed to desperate tears
Too trouble-vexed to make a choice,
Then down thru the sigh of the surfing years
I feel her wisdom find my voice.

I cannot remember all she did;
Life's work is done yet always there,
But when I am weary, burden-bent
Too spiritless to even start,
Thru all her hours in service spent
I feel her strength refresh my heart. ✓

I cannot remember all she taught;
Lessons are blurred like pages thumbed,
But when my own bitter hour falls
And darkness seems the only goal,
Thru the grace of a thousand painful calls
I feel her courage swell my soul!

PAT POTEL



Janet Peregoy

"Night Mare"

Your brown-eyed beauty
Stops to gaze
Freedom to canter
Into the wind

She will always meet
The crooked rusted wire fence
At field's end

She sips from your bucket
and nibbles your oats
Her coat is glistening sweat
Black satin in the moonlight

Let me run away
Tomorrow.
I will let you catch me

I've had enough "human"
for today.

THEA AILEEN CHAPIN

Pallid Voices Pallid Visages

Pale women and blond women arrive
to pour life into dead hearts.
They're a mixture of mountain sky
and valley flower. . . .
pursued by Night's abusive shadows.

From the holes in the Night they call.
The call comes with desperation. . .
Their eyes are blue. . .
The skin white. . .
The hair platinum blond,
whose light color bites into the Night.

Their love so deep you'd sink.
And you always wishing there were no end.
They come bringing reflections
of their image that have one destination.

I hear the cries:
my only irritation.
My Life's, heart, and mind's expectations.
The moment's merry inspirations.

JESUS A. GUTIERREZ

THE WINDMILL

Down the stream is a windmill which is haunted, some people say. The windmill is old and brokendown. One day, some people came to look at a house close by.

"The house is perfect," they said. The seller told them about the windmill and the house—the other occupants had disappeared after ten days and were never seen.

One snowy night, the kids' mom woke up and heard a weird noise. She went downstairs to take a look. She looked out the window. She looked in all directions and then the lights went out and she saw two red eyes looking at her. She screamed and the lights went on, and her husband came running down the stairs and said, "What is the matter?"

She said, "I was seeing things."

On the ninth day, they all woke up on the floor. All the other furniture was gone and so was the car. The line was dead. Later that night it started raining. At twelve o'clock, they all walked toward the windmill. They stopped in front of it. They saw a sign which read "The Devil's Pit," and they stared at it. Then the blades on it started to turn. The doors opened and they were sucked inside and were never seen.

A couple of days later the house was for sale again.

DON GRUSZKA

Freedom From, Freedom For

I
Solzhenitsyn?
I don't know
Gulag Archipelago?
maybe so
whoever the oppressors
in whoever's name they oppress
the people's revolution
legitimate owner's god
fatherland
motherland
Easter bread
borscht
strudel
chittlins
McDonald's delight
oppression is oppression
prison is prison

so for all I know
Solzhenitsyn
might have something there
besides the millions he's made
from avid capitalist readers

but
how about Saigon Archipelago?
South and North American Archipelago?
Sugarland and Huntsville Texas
Attica Clinton Dannemora New York
Michigan City Indiana
Joliet and Cook County Illinois
Archipelago?

Midnight Special
shine your light
on all of us prisoners
prison prisoners
and T-V prisoners
captives of the late late show
school prisoners
ghetto prisoners
suburban prisoners
expressway prisoners
consumers manipulated
by executive prisoners
in Civilization Archipelago
the chain of insulated cells
that police us safely from ourselves

II
I am free
to spit back in your face
free
to refuse to salute
the flag that's supposed
to stand for my freedom
not to salute it

I am free
to wipe the spittle
from your face
and mine
to see the face
of my sister my brother
my lover myself
through all the layers of spittle
and make-up
and polite masks
that hide the true
PER-SONA
sounding through
the sevenfold veil

III
I hear the touch of your reality
more than I could ever see it
I hear your stillness
feel your heartbeat
know your inmost soul
I dive down deep
into the pool of your womb
you refresh me
into a lover man
momentarily real
forever rising
from the grave
to Hallelujah laughter
of our grandchildren

JOHN MCSHEEHAN

THE LAST OUTPOST

*Calm and smiling, we sit
in our white caps,
true Nightingales,
with aid for the less fortunate.
This is our glass house;
this room is a hothouse;
here ivy vegetates in plastic pots;
here we flourish under false light.*

*Calm and smiling, Elsie sits
in hand-downs from the rich church women,
a true religious,
with incredible news for the unsaved heathen.
This is her last outpost;
her room is her mission house;
here God's pamphlets speak in tongues on the tables;
here Elsie herself
dreams back her corner of our round world.*

*Jungle leaves gawk behind her,
then lift foreheads to the sun,
unmasking faces underneath.
Chanting children come for lessons.
Old men passing take the song,
then drop it down.
It rises in the fierce noon sun
and fires where old wives cook and sing.
Boys make torches from the flames,
circling huts with fire and song
strong enough to bring the men.
Now the village warms itself;
the men incant;
the women dance, babies loose upon their backs;
huts flare into temples;
people swallow fire like gods.
Elsie cannot help herself;
she draws too close;
hot tongues sting her hands and feet;
she thinks the fire will eat her.*

*We only want her for supper,
but she will not come.
She has had warnings,
Missioners' stories of nights
when the villagers danced
on the tongues of their gods.*

ANN WILLIAMSON

Insomnia

(for Steven, though he does not know it yet)

I wake in the night
and what little light filters
through the space between the drapes
is just enough to diffuse
and mellow the black against blacker
shadows of alien masses.

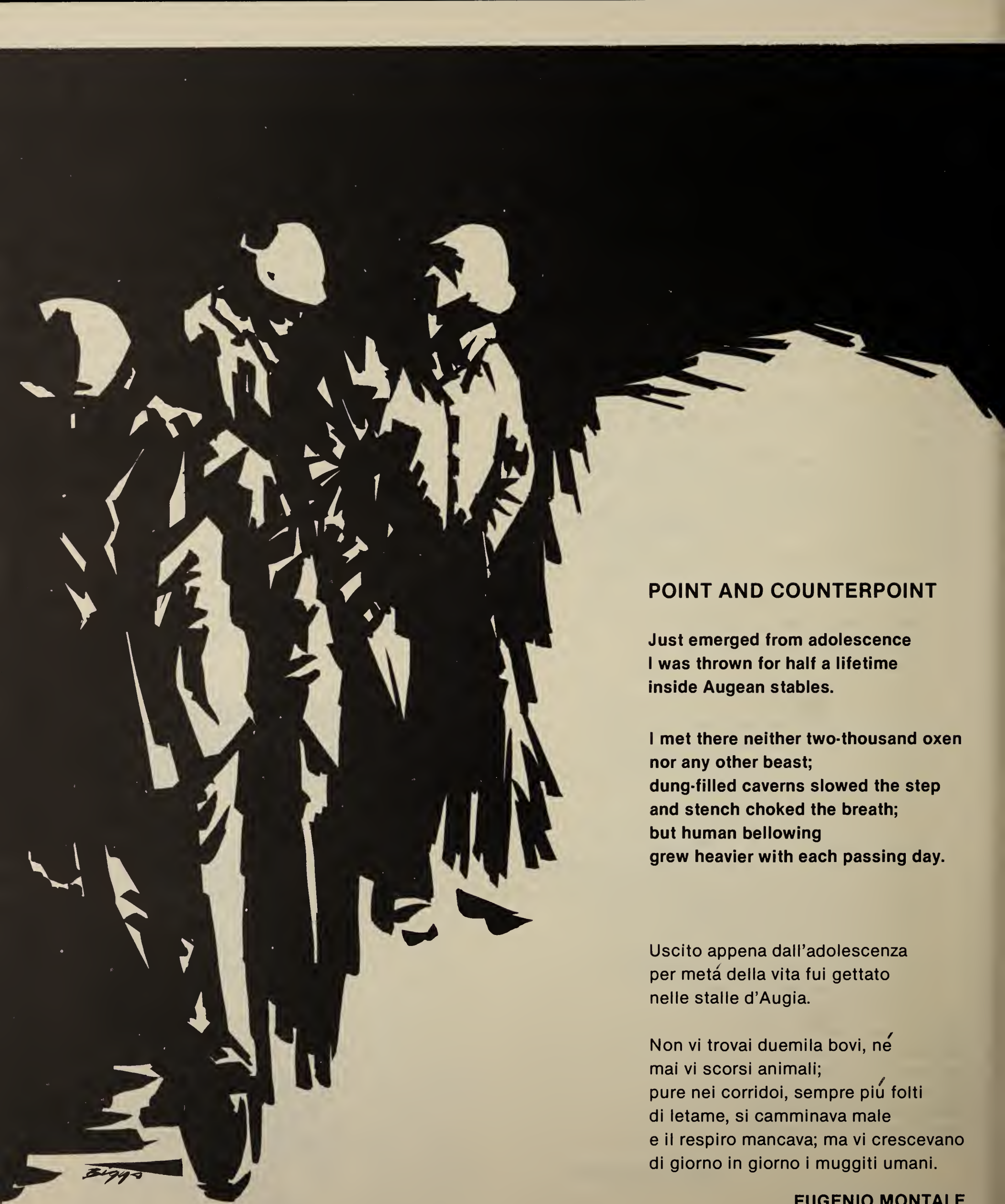
In the dark, my fingers
have Braille-read the poetry
that is you
until, like an actor conning his part,
your every pore
became familiar to me
as Shakespeare's lines.

I hesitate,
my hand above your head
in benediction,
for I can tell
even what you are dreaming;
I know you,
that is to say,
I love you.

DENISE SOBILO



John Bolinger



POINT AND COUNTERPOINT

Just emerged from adolescence
I was thrown for half a lifetime
inside Augean stables.

I met there neither two-thousand oxen
nor any other beast;
dung-filled caverns slowed the step
and stench choked the breath;
but human bellowing
grew heavier with each passing day.

Uscito appena dall'adolescenza
per metà della vita fui gettato
nelle stalle d'Augia.

Non vi trovai duemila bovi, né
mai vi scorsi animali;
pure nei corridoi, sempre più folti
di letame, si camminava male
e il respiro mancava; ma vi crescevano
di giorno in giorno i muggiti umani.

EUGENIO MONTALE

The Birthday Present

One of these days it's finally going to sink in. After thirteen years you'd think I'd learn cooking's much easier when the hamburger's thawed. But no, here I am again frying the heck out of a block of ice. Guess I better turn the fan on. Smoke really wrecks a ceiling, and I bitched long enough to get it painted. Damn, should have run the dishwasher earlier. The noise around here is enough to drive a person to . . .

"When we gonna EAT." It was not a question.

"We'll eat when it's ready, honey." I shouldn't let it bother me. Boys that age are always hungry, and he is growing fast, but the same old question over and over again is enough to irritate a saint.

"Come get some celery, sweetheart." God, that sounded phoney. My mommy-sing-song voice, universal blight of the female with young in the nest. Must be a defense. Chirp like a nightingale or yell.

"I HATE celery." I was just turning the brick of meat when it plopped over in the grease, splattering my hand.

"Now look what you made Mommy do!" Cold water. Put it under cold water. That's what the latest articles say to do. And he's just digging in the refrigerator. "You made Mommy burn her hand. You shouldn't sneak up on Mommy like that. It makes Mommy nervous. Very nervous."

"I wasn't sneaking," he said sullenly without turning. "I was just hungry, and there's never nuthin' good to eat around here. Jeffrey's mother makes Finger Jello."

"Never ANYthing, darling. Well, you just get Mommy the recipe for Finger Jello, and I'll make some for you."

"That's what you said last time. So I asked, and Jeffrey's mother said just plain old Jello with a half a cup less water. You pour it in a big pan and cut it in little rectangles when it's hard. Then you eat it with your fingers. I already told you, and you still never made any."

"A half cup, sugar—well, Mommy just forgot. Mommy gets very busy. Mommy goes to school and cleans the house and washes the clothes and cooks the meals, and sometimes Mommy just gets tired and forgets things."

"Jeffrey's mother stays home. She bakes cookies and cakes, and they always have good stuff to eat. She even made Jeffrey a Spider Man costume for Halloween."

"Don't you remember when Mommy made you the Eeyore costume for the play at school? All your teacher said was that you were going to be a donkey—nothing elaborate. I worked on it for a whole week."

"It was dumb."

"Daddy and I thought you were darling. You were even better than Winnie-the-Pooh."

"Eeyor's a jackass. Jeffrey said so."

"What did you say, honey? Mommy can't hear when she's cooking, and there's so much racket."

"Nuthin'," he said, walking toward the family room with an orange in each hand.

"Now you be sure ALL the peelings go IN the wastebasket." Lord, I wish I could stop saying things like that. It's almost as bad as the voice. So Motherly. All the articles say you should be more natural with children. They *are* people. But it's so hard to remember when they're your own. Mother warned me about that, but she wasn't any different. It was all the same old reminding about clean underwear in case you had an accident, and not picking pimples, and how Uncle Henry used Coca-Cola to un-stick pipes that rusted together.

"MUH-ther!"

"Yes, dear?" God, I wish she wouldn't call me that—or at least not like that. It's so patronizing. Next year she'll be a teenager, and I think the articles are right. It's going to be difficult.

"Mother, where are my tube socks, the ones with the yellow and green stripes?"

"Clean clothes are in your drawers, and dirty clothes are in the hamper."

"They are **not** in my drawer, and I have a game in a half an hour."

"Half an hour, sweetheart. Game? You play basketball on Monday and Friday. This is Wednesday."

"MUH-ther, that was practice. Now we're playing regular games, and I simply must have my socks. Everybody on the team

has tube socks with green and yellow stripes. I just cannot show up in anything else. It would be nerdy."

"It would be what, dear?"

"Forget it. Here they are in the hamper. I'll just wear 'em even if they are stretched out."

"Hamper? Those socks are filthy! You **cannot** put on dirty socks."

"Dirty's better than the wrong color."

"Well, if you have an accident and wind up in a hospital wearing dirty socks, just don't come crying to me. Ladies never wear anything white more than once—not if it touches their skin. . . ."

"See you in an hour or so, Ma. That's my ride. What's on the menu? Ah-so, the old frozen hamburger into casserole gambit. When you gonna learn, Ma?"

"What did you say, sugar? I was just thinking about Grama, and I. . . ." Damn, I wish she wouldn't slam the door like that. Didn't even kiss me goodbye or give me a chance to remind her about her grandmother. I've been so busy with this lousy hamburger I almost forgot myself.

The operation was this morning. I remembered because it was scheduled the same time as my speech class. Eleven o'clock. We were discussing communication, and I definitely remembered exactly when the class started that Mom was in the operating room. Then I sort of put it in the back of my head. Nothing I could do being so far away and all.

Dede would have called by now if everything weren't OK, that I know. If there's one person you really get to know, it's a sister, and—there, almost thawed. Just keep turning and peeling off the browned layer. About two more turns—well, it's just natural to really get to know people when you grow up in the same house. Five more minutes and she'll call. At least one of us was there, one of the daughters. Besides, it was just a routine sort of thing. Lots of women have hysterectomies at fifty-eight, if not before.

Fifty-eight? God, Ma will be 59 tomorrow. I almost forgot in all the commotion. Her birthday, and I almost forgot. That's really terrible, but we've been talking about this surgery for three weeks now, and frankly, I was getting a little sick of hearing about it. Some people do get a little hung-up on symptoms, and it's not that Mother's a complainer or anything like that, but it was getting a little tiresome.

Mom really did call often—sort of to reassure me that it was all just routine—and a lot of other foolishness. But now that I think about it, she said something really weird. She said she loved me. The first time she said it, I didn't know what to say. It was awkward. I sort of paused. . . because she hadn't said anything like that to me for years. I mean, saying you love somebody isn't really weird, and naturally when somebody says it, you just say you love them too—right back—automatically. But this was weird. Maybe it was out of context.

That's it. Out of context. We were talking about Christmas. She wanted to know what to buy for the kids and started talking about a birthstone ring for Michele—a real diamond, and I told her that was absolute foolishness. Twelve-year-old kids don't have real diamonds. But she said she wanted Christmas to be real special. It was just running through my mind that it was September, and I couldn't figure out why she was stewing about Christmas so early. If there's one thing Mother is not, it's organized; and that's when she said she loved me. I guess it caught me off guard.

II

There's the phone. It's just past five. Got to be Dede. She always was cheap. Had to wait until the rates changed.

"Hi. Dede? Hi. I've been waiting for your call. Hang on while I turn off the dishwasher and the fan. You'll never guess what I'm doing. I'm frying frozen hamburger again, and it's so noisy I can hardly hear. You know how I always forget to take meat out. One of these days I'll wise up. Hold on one more second while I get Billy to turn down the television."

"TURN DOWN THAT DAMN TV!"

"There. Now I can hear. Dede? Are you there? It's like a three-ring circus around here. I swear the next generation will be deaf thanks to television, but that's kids for you. Billy just sneaked up behind me and made me burn my hand. I put it under cold water,

but it's still blistering. Dede? Say something. Oh, how's Mom?"

"The surgery's over, and Mom is waking up." Gee, she sounds far away. I know it's five hundred miles, but telephones really should work better than this. I mean, people call all over the world, and it's supposed to be clear as a bell—at least that's what the commercials say.

"Well, that's just great Dede. I was really worried and concerned, and I'm just glad it's over. I thought about it through my whole class this morning, and I just knew you'd call right away if there was anything unusual. I've been home since two o'clock, and when the phone didn't ring, I just knew everything was fine. Besides, you know how I feel about worrying. It's useless and destructive, and there'd be a lot fewer ulcers around if people just quit worrying. Mom did sort of carry on about the operation, but we know Mom. Dede?"

"I'm here." Well, let me tell you, if this call were on my bill, I'd demand they erase the charge. I don't know when I've had such a lousy connection.

"Dede, I've got sort of a problem, and I just know you'll help me out. With all the fuss about the surgery I completely forgot to send Mom a birthday card. It's her birthday tomorrow you know."

"I know." Well of course she knows. It was stupid of me to even mention it. I remembered, and I don't even live in the same town or even get to see Mom as often as she does.

"Well, it would really take a load off my mind if you'd run out and pick up a card from us. Something with a pretty verse. Nothing contemporary. Mom never did have much of a sense of humor, and she's hardly in a mood to laugh with stitches in her belly. She probably won't care about her birthday one way or the other after just having surgery, but I did want to remember her. Maybe we should chip in on some flowers. I know Mom hates flowers—says they're too expensive for the short time you get to enjoy them and they remind her of funerals—but they're always convenient at the last minute. Just let me know what I owe you. Dede? You sure aren't saying much. I know you've always been the quiet one, but this is ridiculous."

"I'm here."

"Now how about if I ask you questions, and you answer me?" Maybe if I lead her a little, she'll open up. She always was quiet—pretty too—and frankly, I've always kind of wondered if she weren't a bit on the slow side.

"I'll ask, and you answer." It's always good to repeat directions—just to be sure everything's perfectly clear.

"I will if I can." Now the connection is really bad. She sounds absolutely muffled.

"Well of course you can, honey. You were there. I mean, you talked to the doctor. Now tell me exactly what they removed. You know all the words. Just think real hard and remember."

"They took out one ovary and one tube."

"Dede, that's absurd! Now you just hold the phone a minute while I turn off the stove, and we'll get this straight."

"There. Now I have no distractions. Say what you just said."

"One ovary and one tube." There's something wrong here. She's speaking clearly, and I'm hearing what she's saying, but when a person Mother's age has major surgery, they finish the job. It was a routine hysterectomy. That's what she was scheduled for, and that's what the doctor should have done. The surgeon has a fine reputation, of that I'm absolutely sure. We checked. And if the clock would stop ticking so loud, I could think this straight in my mind.

"Why, Dede?" Now even my voice sounds too loud. I've got to think clearly, and my voice sounds as if I'm losing control, which is ridiculous because I'm a very logical, controlled person. "Why didn't they remove everything?"

"They couldn't." Her voice is breaking, and it's not the connection. It never was the connection, and there are times you wish the clock would stop ticking, and if you just don't say the words, it's not real. Nothing is real without a name.

The phone didn't really ring. This is a dream, and pretty soon I'll wake up. I'll finish the casserole and check to see if the orange peelings are in the wastebasket; then the phone will ring, and Dede will say everything is fine—just fine—and I must remember to tell her about the birthday card.

But this is not a dream. I am a grown-up person, and I know that if I can feel the floor under my feet and wiggle my toes and switch the receiver to my other ear and still hear the crying, I am not dreaming. And there's one more question to ask, but the

words won't come out. My throat is closing and the words just don't want to come out.

"Was there—was there anything else? Was there, Dede?"

"Yes." She shouldn't have said that. I mean, she just said it, and I know she's crying, and I know I'm crying too because I can feel the tears on my face, and it's really strange because I can't remember the last time I cried for no reason at all.

There was a tumor. I know they found a tumor even if we can't say the words, but lots of people have tumors, and most of them are benign. They found a tumor, and as long as Mom was all opened up like that, they just took it out. They took it out, and she'll get all better, and someday we'll laugh about it.

"So they took it out. They took it out and it's gone and it was nothing." I sound absolutely hysterical, and she's not answering me. She's just crying and not answering me. "DEDE."

"It's—it's too far gone. The doctor said there was nothing she could do. She said she was sorry. So tomorrow they'll tell Mom. That was the last thing Mom said. She wanted to know."

"NOOO!" I'm going to throw up. I just know I'm going to throw up and I've got to make it to the bathroom because it's very childish to throw up on a clean floor when you can make things so much easier for yourself. So much easier.

"Can't talk, Dede. Just can't talk anymore. Don't cry. Please don't cry. Dede, are you there? Dede, I love you."

That's funny. She hung up.

III

What's that in the driveway? I hear a noise. It's a motory noise. Very car-like. Definitely car-like. Absolutely.

Whoever was in the car just opened the garage door. This I know for a fact because we have a very noisy garage door—very noisy and very heavy. Crashes like that every time.

Who could it be? A burglar? Possibly. It could be a very pushy burglar crashing into the garage, or it could just possibly be the lady's adoring husband.

Sit up, lady. Sit up straight. Ladies sit up very straight and do not pick their teeth in public. And ladies wear a girdle. Always wear a girdle. Tighter the better. Never let your ass jiggle in public. Dead giveaway every time. Dead giveaway. Ladies do not jiggle. Mother said so.

The door to the family room is slamming. It is either the lady's husband greeting his beaming children—child?—or there is a burglar in the family room with one, two, or however-the-hell many there are of my children. All my children. Whole bunch. Just a whole bunch of children. Children coming out of the god-damn wordwork with their fingerprints and runny noses and whiney little voices.

I just love children. Love children. Wall-to-wall children. Nice little carbon copies of everything I hate about myself or reminders of everything I'm not. It's like looking in the magnifying side of a mirror. Pores like craters. Gotta get more ice. More ice. More ice for my nice little carbon-copy children, and we'll have a toast to their funny-runny noses.

Whoops. Outa the way, chair. You are impeding progress. Progress from the table to the freezer. Trip me like that again, and you've had it. No dinner. No dinner and no TV. You'll learn. Works every time. Someday you'll grow up to be a good chair—and thank me.

"If it isn't too much of an imposition, would you mind telling me what's going on!"

I hear a voice. I hear a voice talking to the back of my head, and it sounds familiar. Very familiar. Couldn't be a burglar. I am not personally familiar with one single burglar. Not personally. It is a voice I recognize, the voice that signs the checks and forever wants to know why a certain shirt is in the wash. But I will not turn around. Just will not turn around—because if I turn around and see a real person—that person is really there. Really there.

Maybe it's just my imagination—my gloriously creative imagination. Well, I will not be fooled by my gloriously creative imagination. I will continue getting some very real, concrete ice and not let it clink in the glass. Just lower it slowly so it doesn't clink. Doesn't count if it doesn't clink.

"I know you don't realize what it means to work ten hours a day, but when a man comes home and finds his two children glued to the television, and they tell him their mother said to go away and not bother her. . . ."

"Two?"

"Children. Two beautiful, healthy children. Just what the hell's going on around here! What's that on the table? Scotch? I just bought that bottle. The seal wasn't even cracked, and it's half gone. You don't even like scotch. Company? That's it. You had company."

"The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker. . . ."

"Frankly, my dear, I think you've been drinking."

"Frankly, my dear, I think you're right, and your fucking Rhett Butler imitation stinks."

"I'm going to change my clothes. I'll change my clothes; then we'll talk about it. Something is obviously bothering you."

Walking down the hall. Just walking down the hall. He'll take off his tie and put on the grey pants with the baggy seat. Lord, for the day he shows up at work that way. Goddamn secretaries'd puke. Only at home. Home sweet home.

Home. There's something about home. The kitchen doesn't look quite right. Something's on the stove. Something I didn't finish, and whoops, chair, you definitely got it coming. No TV and no popcorn.

The stove. A pan. Hamburger? Don't think it came with the pan, but right now I sorta wish it did. Easier to explain. Definitely easier to explain the way it's just sorta floating there in its own fat. Hamburger doing the backstroke.

Gotta stop giggling. Something is not very funny, and I can't remember what it is. Something is just not funny at all. Couldn't be a joke. Jokes are always very funny. Very funny. I always laugh at jokes—even if they aren't funny. Wouldn't wanna hurt anybody's feelings. People's feelings are very important.

"Now. . . ."

I wish he'd stop saying that. It's like there was a now, or a yesterday, or a tomorrow—and he found the grey pants. Shit. Into the Goodwill. Tomorrow. Goodwill. Wouldn't wanna insult the garbage men.

". . . we obviously have something bothering us. I can tell because we don't drink. Not like this. Not in the afternoon and never alone. We don't drink unless it's a special occasion, or a celebration, or with a friend, or. . . ."

"I didn't throw up."

"What, dear?"

"I didn't throw up. I felt like I had to, but I didn't."

"Well, that's nice, but why would you want to throw up? Are you ill? Sweetheart, you don't look well, and why is your scrapbook on the kitchen table?"

"Scrapbook? Scrapbook. I made it when I was 16. I was gonna run away, and I wanted pictures of everybody just so I wouldn't forget. Just didn't want to forget. And I never did. See. That's my father. He's dead."

"I know, honey. Your daddy's been dead for a long time." God, I wish he wouldn't pat my hand that way and pretend I was something normal.

"Yup. Dead. Very dead. I saw him dead. In a coffin. I even helped pick it. But he was alive when they took the picture. See. This is the telegram he sent to tell me he was coming home from the war. It wasn't even addressed to my mother. It was addressed to me, and I couldn't even read, and he was alive. Can't send a telegram when you're dead. Can't send. . . ."

"Sweetheart, I think we'd better call the doctor. You remember the nice doctor you talk to when you don't feel well—when you take one of your little moods?"

"And this is my birth certificate. It means I was born. Nothing important. Look how yellow it is. But if you just put it back—put it back!—and turn the page—TURN THE PAGE—there's my mother. That's my mother when she graduated high school. Isn't she beautiful? She really was. Just like my sister. If you only look at the eyes, people say I sorta look like her, but not much. Only the eyes.

"And she was bright—my mother. She was in the Honor Court, and they called her the Geometry Whiz. I remember when she told me that. I laughed. It seemed funny because I was doing geometry homework, and I didn't think my mother ever heard of geometry. She always seemed so dumb. Really stupid, but I knew she didn't lie. Never lied. A little stupid, but she never lied."

"Uh, the doctor's name? You're the one who sees him. Damned expensive too. I remember writing all the checks. Vividly. Last time it was the check right after the one I wrote for the lawn service. You remember when I had the lawn analyzed. Marvelous job they did getting rid of the broadleaf weeds. One application and it really did the trick."

"That's my grampa. He's dead too. It's just a picture of a tombstone, but it's the best one we have of him. I remember after the funeral they were counting the money. There was just enough to pay for it, the funeral and the stone. It's really pretty. We used to go to the cemetery every Sunday and look at it. Really pretty. Even had his name on it.

"And that's me. You just turn the page, and that's me. TURN THE PAGE. Me. I'm newborn there—with my mother and dad. Don't they look happy? So young. Ma still has that chair. She's had it recovered twice and talkin' about a third time. They got it free for buying the living room set. The couch was blue—blue mohair; then Ma had it done in green—a green something with a lot of loops. Used to yell at me for my buckles catching in the loops. When they moved, Dad stored it in his warehouse and it got mice. Never saw any—but a lotta turds. Ma was real upset."

"His name, sweetheart? The doctor's name?"

"They almost named me Maron. God, I'm glad they didn't. Sounds retarded. I'm not retarded, or slow, or anything like that. Did you ever notice? Maron. Just sounds very stable, large, terribly reliable. Reliable and conventional. I've always liked funny hats. When I get depressed, I always go to Field's and try on funny hats."

"Honey?"

"But that's me. And me again. Just turn the page and that's me. I'll turn it. Two-and-a-half there—tied to the front porch. Ma used to tie me to the front porch. The rope wasn't all that long, but I do remember getting a sucker."

"Hey, you're bald!"

"You knew that. Knew that when you married me. Never had any hair to speak of until I was almost four. When some finally grew, my mother curled it, and I remember sitting under the dining room table cutting it all off with Ma's manicure scissors. She cried. Then she scotchaped a bow on my head for the Christmas program. I wore a blue velvet dress. Ma made it. Blue velvet. I can still feel it. It was dumb."

"Who's this? Right here. I can't tell who's what." Humoring me. He's humoring me. A thousand times he's seen this scrapbook, and every time I've explained, and he's humoring me.

"That's me on the left."

"That's a boy, dear. No hair—neuter outfit."

"It's me, and I'm out of ice."

"No more, sugar. No more. The name. It's common. I remember it from the checks. Milburn, Milberg? You have no idea the trouble I'm having not to become upset, and. . . I thought I heard a funny whining noise. It's the phone. Dear? The phone is off the hook."

"Off the hook? Phone? Oh, you mean that thing just sort of laying there on the cutting board. Right next to the knife. Now I remember. I was going to chop the cord into teeny-tiny pieces and add it to the hamburger. Give it a little color. But I forgot. Just forgot."

He's putting the receiver back. Shouldn't do that. There's something wrong with putting it back. Phones ring that way. Just like it's ringing now, and he's answering it. Dumb shit is answering it.

Gotta put a little more scotch on the ice. Love ice. Hate scotch but love ice. There's just times you punish yourself. Isn't all that bad if you don't breathe when you swallow. Rotten if you breathe. Just rotten if you breathe.

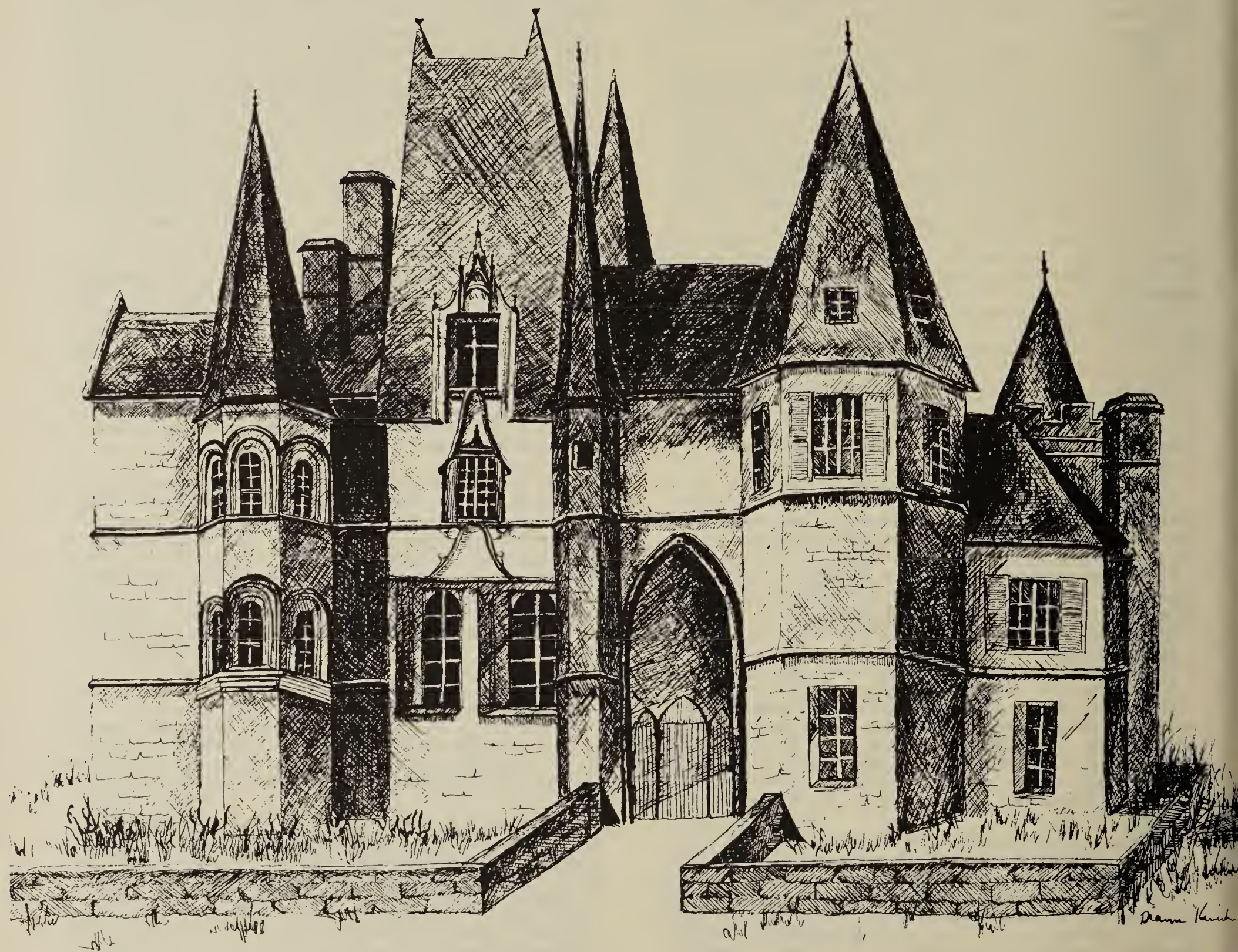
He's not saying much—just turning grey. Turning grey like his pants. Shouldn't have answered that phone. Just shouldn't have answered it.

People do tell some incredible stories. Absolutely incredible. Don't know why they do that. Lies. All lies.

Gram's still alive so nuthin's wrong with Ma. Can't be. People die in order. In order. It's regular and orderly just like opening Christmas presents—first Grampa, then Gram—then all the way down to the youngest. . . .

And I gotta get out of here. Just gotta get out of here. Out. Down the stairs. Gotta get down the stairs and to my kids. Gotta find my kids. Just gotta find my kids.

KAREN LEE JACKSON



Dianne Kresich

*My abandoned castle
what may you contrive
Emptiness will only cause
malignant dust to rise*

*As rigormortis to a torso
time will pass you by
No presence of your KING
and love
to keep the chambers live*

DOUG NORRIS

Yesteryear's Dreams

LAMBENCY

Sincere cerulean eyes
And tender torrid omniscient touch—
Your simple honest truth
Indelible initials inscribed in permanence
Upon my life—in your own special script.

Two separate symmetric spirits
Join to conceive congruent communication.
Synonomous translucent thoughts,
Intermeshing iridescent ideals—
Rubrics arranged in abstract clarity
Of mutual comprehension.

Unpledged promises-
Unspoken commitments-
Love exempt from expectations
Chains of freedom binding us in honesty
Silent tears—secret fears—and unused smiles
Forfeited and shared in timeless trust
Lie strown and scattered
On a marble memory floor

And I—
The crushed and fallen caryatid
Swallowed by her stone—
Lie crumpled here alone
Holding tightly
Loose magic immutable moments—

Memories carved in curling branches—
On barrowed twisting tangled limbs
Of our ephemeral time.

RANDI INMAN

*Did they get you to trade
your heroes for golden fools
hot ashes for green trees
all covered with pain
Did they sell you the smile they told you to paint
Did they print diamonds on your eyes
to trade for coal for a cold fire
Did they get you to strike your dreams
on paper and books and go blind half the time
Did they get you to pay your hopes turning gray
for a pile of small change
Did you really believe it'd made you feel free
Would you exchange your own fate for a raise
Then welcome son
Welcome to the machine
And learn how to die in the new day's dream.*

STUART BALFOUR

(FOR ANNE SEXTON)

I am glad your rowing is at an end.
I envied you.
Your struggle, for all its torment,
Had no element of fear.
Ideas were clear.
You recognized your doom
And still, like Ahab, pursued it
Past human endurance.
I do not mind the rowing:
It is water that I fear—
Wild waves ready to engulf
A soul incapable of rising;
I fear the flooding of my boat,
Sinking below slate surfaces
Into everlasting chambers of green.
That's why I envied you:
You measured yourself,
Recognized the radius of merely mortal,
And, there, in the grey,
You rested on your oarlocks
Within shrieking distance of the shore,
And waited, at last calmly,
Understanding that it was no longer necessary,
Nor appropriate to row;
Waves surged over your bow,
Water hummed, birds circled,
As you returned to the elements.
Knowing when to stop rowing:
That's the immutable secret.

B.E. BALOG

CHARACTER SKETCH

The ticking of the clock annoyed her; she could feel each second dripping away on her nerves like a Chinese water torture. She picked up a magazine from the stand, flipped through the pages, then threw it down impatiently. Her five long, fashionably red fingernails drummed on the plastic arm of the chair in unconscious imitation of the clock. One had cracked, she noticed peevishly, and no way to fix it. Restless, she crossed her legs, not failing even in her irritation to pause and admire their sleekness, their smoothness. Not like the legs of the girl sitting across, marbled and heavy like an inferior cut of beef.

She glanced at her wrist watch, annoyance cascading into anger at being forced to wait, at being here at all, at being put on a par with such a hopeless piece of humanity. The way the girl crouched on the edge of her chair, those awful legs squeezed tightly together, her hands clasped timidly in her lap, her head downcast, reminded her of a plump, greasy sausage frying in a pan, curling up on itself. A dowdy sausage stuffed into a dress two years out of fashion and too frumpy to have ever been fashionable. It filled her mouth with the disagreeable remembrance of breakfast—sausages and coarse, lumpy oatmeal—the way her father had made it. She never ate breakfast now; anything but strong black coffee in the morning made her nauseous.

They called her name, and as she collected her coat and purse, the girl across the room raised her head and stared. Her eyes were watery and red-rimmed from crying, yet arresting in the depths of their melancholy. Two pools of warm, sticky molasses—like the pleading eyes of the baby on the poster outside. She nervously crushed out her cigarette and with another anxious glance at the clock, she stepped through the doors leading to the abortion clinic. The click of her high heels thundered through the length of the empty hall.

DENISE SOBILO

(EULOGY OF A FLOWER)

It had a difficult struggle from seedhood. The dirt was heavy and it took enormous strength to push its way clear. There were many weeds that wanted to tangle and destroy its insignificant being. However it learned to overcome this, if it didn't bend much and stood as straight as possible it might be forgotten by its enemies. It plunged determinately through the ground, and was immediately rewarded by a lovely warmth and brilliant light. It could stretch tall opening limbs to the warmth, swaying carelessly in the breeze. Unsatisfied though and wanting more, it defiantly devoured the sun and rain with uncontrollable greed. Towering proudly above the garden, shadowing fellow blossoms, it was most determined to exceed all other flowers that had ever existed. It cannot be denied, it was truly and unmistakably magnificent. . . . Perhaps that's why the little girl picked it.

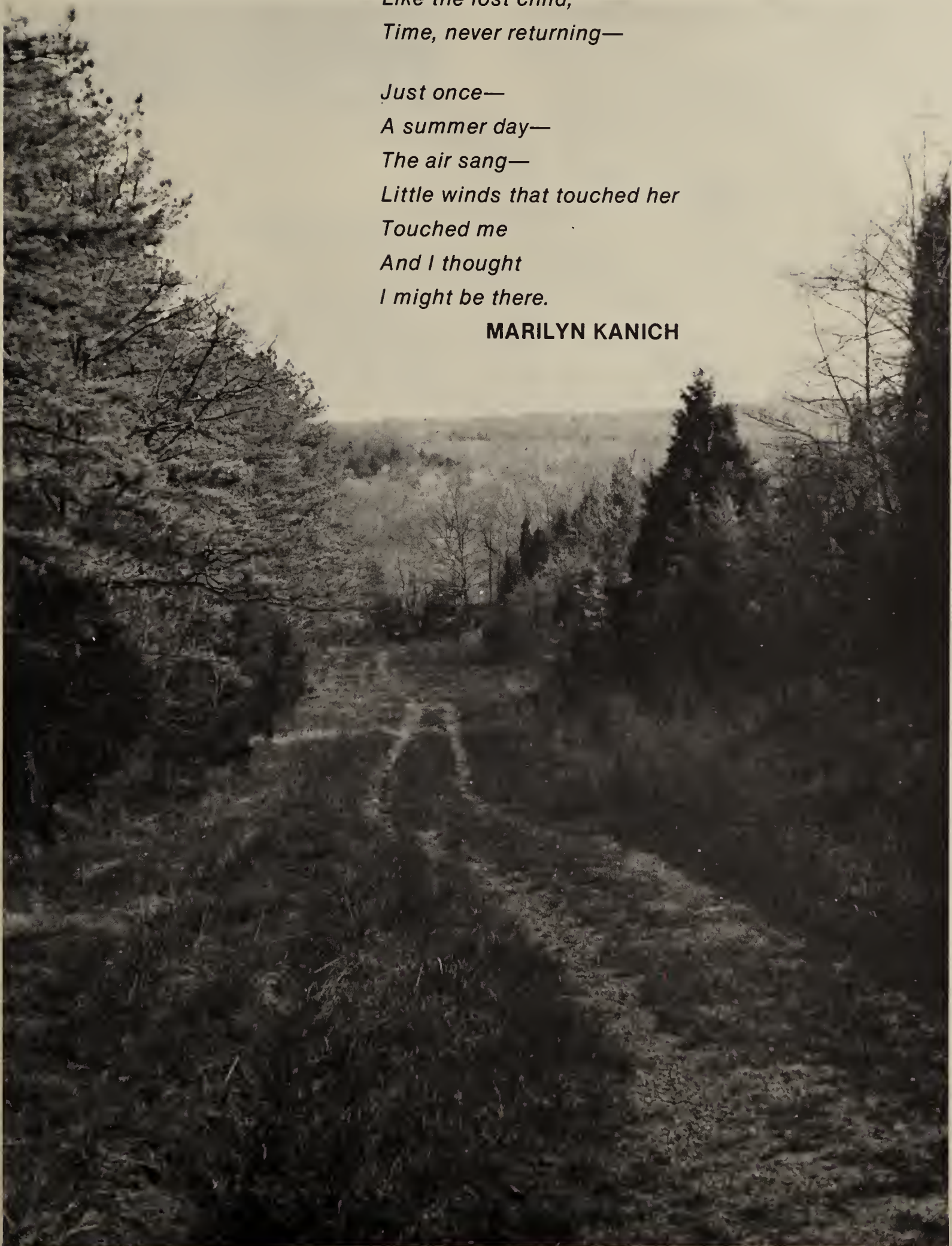
KAREN ECKENRODE

Summer Day

*At last
I saw only the road—
Curving downward—
Disappearing
In fields behind us—
Lost,
Like the lost child,
Time, never returning—*

*Just once—
A summer day—
The air sang—
Little winds that touched her
Touched me
And I thought
I might be there.*

MARILYN KANICH



ATHELAS LEAF

*Comfortably,
like the willing sleep of a frozen death,
I ease into lethargy;
the frostbite of ambitions
settles in the extremities
and unerringly,
the chill poison of a Nazgul dagger
inches toward the soul.*

*The hand of the king
is the hand of the healer
and its touch on my forehead
awakens a fever in my brain.
Like an emaciated beggar
who bolts his chance handout
and burns his tongue,
I want to be consumed in the fire of living.*

DENISE SOBILO

THE STRAW MAN

There, immobile, a contrived essence of hate.
Unborn tomorrow and dead yesterday,
the human form guards the grain.

Sun bleached rags and yellow stuffed soul;
Crucified in a vast loneliness.
Companioned by the caws of the arch enemy.

Horrified with fears of the Eternal Flame.
Possessing intimate knowledge of the sprouted life.
And nightly; dreams of the adventure,
with Dorothy, the Wizard and the Yellow Brick Road.

FILBY HUSTED

Done the Tense Hours

Soft, light flowing air-waves
Move upon your lips.
Sleep's silent restful sounds
Lying listless and lasting
Deep within your soul.

DOUG NORRIS



Doug Forbes

Downtown Bethlehem, Saturday Night

Scene I—Mary and Joseph in workshop

Joe: Mary, did you have anything planned for the week-end?
 Mary: I thought we'd go to my cousin's house and spend a nice, quiet family Christmas together.
 Joe: You know what I was thinking? I thought we could go up to Bethlehem for the weekend. We could leave Friday afternoon, right after work, and come back Sunday afternoon.
 Mary: Whatever for? What on earth would you want to go to Bethlehem for?
 Joe: Didn't you hear about the new census Rome wants to take? They want everybody to register in his home town. Besides, we have to file our tax returns, anyway.
 Mary: Why don't we just mail our W-2's like everybody else? We don't have to go all the way to Bethlehem for that.
 Joe: But you know how slow the mail is, especially around the holidays. C'mon, let's go; the trip will do you good.
 Mary: Look at me; I'm in no shape to travel. You know how dirty and dusty the roads are this time of year.
 Joe: Don't worry about it—we'll take the camper and you can relax in the back. You can leave the driving to me. We'll leave right after breakfast Sunday, and you can still enjoy Christmas dinner with your family.
 Mary: But what do you want to go to Bethlehem for? I still don't know.
 Joe: Think of it. . . .We'd be spending Christmas Eve in the city; folks scurrying about under the bright lights, the hustle and the bustle of city life. . . .(song begins in background: "Silver Bells"—"city sidewalks," etc., finishes: "it's Christmas time in the city.")
 Mary: I could get in some last minute shopping, I suppose, and I'd love to see the decorations in the shopping malls. . .
 Joe: Then it's settled! And I promise you we'll be back in time to have dinner with your family. I'll go over to Fred's and watch the play-offs while you're visiting Martha.
 Mary: More football? Doesn't it ever end?
 Joe: Shortly, my dear, shortly. . . just a few more games to go.
 Mary: Well, all right, we'll go—but promise me? No more fat jokes?
 Joe: Boy Scout's honor—no more fat jokes.

Scene II—Joseph in motel lobby, speaking to clerk

Joe: Hello; you have a room for me and my wife?
 I/Kpr: And who might you be?
 Joe: I am Joseph, from Nazareth; my wife Mary and I have a reservation here for the week-end.
 I/Kpr: Joe and Mary, is it? No last name?
 Joe: No, why?
 I/Kpr: What kind of motel do you think I run here, the Hotel-Notell? Do you think I let just anybody come strolling in here to spend a weekend?

Joe: But I called here on Thursday. I talked to the girl. I made a reservation.
 I/Kpr: Sorry, pal—company policy! Look at this register; no Mr. and Mrs. Joneses, no Mr. & Mrs. Smiths, and no Mary and Joseph no-last-names. (I/Kpr. flips "No" over vacancy sign at counter.)
 Joe: You can't do this to us. I'm just a humble carpenter, but my wife's in the family way, and we've come all the way from Nazareth to spend Christmas Eve in the city. . .
 I/Kpr: So now you're the Carpenters, are you? You show biz people are all alike.
 Joe: But sir, please; Mary is to give birth to our Son, Jesus, at any time now. . .
 I/Kpr: And what makes you so certain you'll have a son?
 Joe: God told us in a dream. He said that Mary would bear the Savior of the world, and that HIS name shall be called Jesus.
 I/Kpr: And did God tell you not to use your last name when you made your reservations? Never mind; I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll let you and the wife stay in the garage; it's not so bad, if you don't mind a few parked cars, and some animals. . .
 Joe: Sleep in a barn?
 I/Kpr: Garage, barn, call it what you will; it's all I've got. Everything is booked solid for the holidays. . .
 Joe: What kind of animals?
 I/Kpr: Just a few goats, sheep, and cows. . . a good host must keep a fresh food supply available to satisfy his guests. Business is business, if you know what I mean. . . and what is fresher than meat on the hoof?
 Joe: Do we get fresh linens?
 I/Kpr: But of course—all the swaddling cloth your little heart desires!
 Joe: Is it clean? We don't want to get stuck in a pig sty!
 I/Kpr: Of course it's clean! Just like our advertisements say, buddy, at this Inn there are no surprises! (Mary walks in, doubled over.)
 Mary: What's taking so long? Do we have a room or not? I don't know if I can make it till Sunday or not. . .
 Joe: Yes, honey, we have a room. . .
 Mary: What does that sign mean? (pointing to 'No Vacancy' sign)
 Joe: We got the last room in the Inn. . . let me tell you about it (Begins song: Away in the manger no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head; the stars in the sky look down where he lay, at Mary and Joseph asleep in the hay.)
 Mary: Where are we going? What kind of room did you get?
 Joe: Don't worry; we have a lovely room—with a view of the beautiful natural surroundings, set off by ourselves. . . and get this: fresh milk any time of the day or night, just in case. . . C'mon, you'll love it!

Scene III—Mary and Joseph in the barn

Mary: Oh, Joseph, they're getting closer; our baby is coming. . .
 Joe: Hold on, Mary, I'll go get help!
 Mary: There isn't time—stay with me!
 Joe: I'll be right back; I'm just going to make a phone call. . .
 (Joseph exists—Scene III-B takes place in motel lobby phone booth. Joseph is fumbling with a directory, looking through the yellow pages. Two party conversation takes place on opposite sides of dividers.)
 Joe: Hello, this is Nazareth of Joseph. . . I mean Mary, the husband of the carpenter. . . are you there?
 Dr.: Slow down. . . who are you?
 Joe: I am Joseph of Nazareth and my wife Mary's gonnadeliver the Lamb of God!
 Dr.: So why call me? Why not call a veterenarian?
 Joe: It's a figure of speech! We're going to be parents to the Savior of the World—if you get here on time. Her pains are three minutes apart now. . . (Operator interrupts)
 Operator: Your three minutes are up, sir; if you wish to talk long, please deposit an additional 35¢.
 Dr.: Did you say the 'Lamb of God'?
 Joe: Yes, I did; will you come?
 Dr.: Where is she now?
 Joe: In the barn, behind the downtown inn. . .
 Dr.: I think you better call the Vet, pal—but don't hold your

breath. . .he doesn't make house calls on holidays, either! (Doctor hangs up.)

Operator: Listen, buddy, about that 35¢—forget it; wait till the girls on the switchboard hear this one. Merry Christmas! (She hangs up.)

Joseph hangs up receiver, walks away from phone booth. Chorus in background sings: "God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay, remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas day, to save us all from Satan's power when we have gone astray—O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, O tidings of comfort and joy.")

Light dims.

Scene IV—Shepherds tending Flocks in country

(Angels of God appears to them.)

(Angel dressed like Harpo Marx.)

Angel: De da te da, datadata (tune of "Joy to the World")
da ta da ta da ta.

Shepherds: Hey! What's goin' on here? Who are you?

Angel, pantomiming, points finger at crowd and waves it in air.

Shepherds: Beware. . .? Take Heed. . .? Hark!!! Hark what?

Angel pulls at long curly hair, pointing.

Shepherds: Head. . .scalp? Scalpo Marx? Hair? Hair! Starts with hair.

Angel holds up two fingers.

Shepherds: Two words. . .hair-blank what? (Angel points to bearded figure.) Hair-beard? Harry face? Harry beard? Harry Cheeks? (Angel points to man, mimics aged man hobbling, doddling along.) Harry Man, Harry old man. . .my father-in-law! (Angel pleads with hand gestures for group to recap its thoughts.) Hair-old. . .(Angel waves hands frantically to cut off sentence.)

Angel: (Points to halo and wings) Da ta ta da, da ta ta ta ("Joy to the World" tune.)

Shepherds: Hark! Harold the Angel sings!!! (Angel nods in agreement.) Now just what is it you're singing about? (Angel cradles arms and sways them in motion of rocking a child) a baby. . .somebody is having a baby? (Angel nods.) Where? (Angel points to a bright star in sky.) At a star. . .by a star. . .near a star. . .at the Holiday Inn? (Angel holds up two fingers, and points toward group) Two. . .me? Two us? Two you? To you! A child is born. . . (Angel points toward town) in Bethlehem. . .a child is born in the city of David (Angel nods emphatically, waves arms in circling motions) A big baby. . .a baby who will be big. . .a child who will do big things. . .a child that will be great among men. . .a King! The King is born in Bethlehem. (Angel motions for shepherds to go.) We must go to Bethlehem to see this King. . .let's go; it beats the heck out of sheep-sitting. (Chorus sings "While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night.")

Light dims.

Scene V—The barn; Mary, Joseph, the baby, the animals, the shepherds, are all present.

(Song: We Three Kings plays softly in background.)

Four Wisemen enter.

First: We have traveled from afar to bring gifts to the child. I offer all the material things the baby will need—basinet, crib, blankets. . .

Joe: Who are you?

First: We are the harbingers of Christmas, the wise men four: Sears, Penny's, Visa, and Master-Charge. We bring gifts to honor this occasion.

Second: I offer travel, motel lodging, gasoline, airfare, you name it. . .

Third: I bring the opportunity of a lifetime—cash when you need it, car seats, snowmobiles, motorcycles, power tools. . .

Fourth: And I offer complete wardrobes in spring, summer, winter, and fall. . .I have everything; you name it, I got it.

All: And we all bring you these on convenient revolving charge accounts, bill you once a month, on the

15th or 30th, you say the word. We have outlets all over the world, and are as near as your phone. . .

Joe: What about you guys over there? What do you want?

Shepherds: We just thought we'd come in out of the rain to dry off.

Second: Actually, the angel Harold told us we'd find you all here, so we thought we'd come in and see what was going on. We could offer you some lamb chops or camel parmesan.

Third: But we'd have to insist on cash; we're not set up to handle charges.

Joe: That's just terrific. . .anybody else got anything to say?

Animals: Moo, bark, bray, and bellow.

Light dims. . .

RAYMOND LISKEY



Other dreams

The decade came loud like a pagan drum.
The Blond women of a different color had come.
Each meaning a different thing each day.
The meaning was not always the same.

They faded in the Night: the final farewell.
They fallowed the twilight toot of the faun.
While I spilled my word and seed, I dreamed.
And I fallow the pagan beat of the streets.

My joy never satisfied.
My hope never right.
I traveled new heights. . .
Years filled with passion and song.

JESUS GUTIERREZ AGUILERA



Cliff Alley

Variations on a Love Theme

I wish to kiss
An echo.
The lovely thing
With a restless mouth
Which tempts me
Because I desire it,
Until realization
Will lose temptation
To the winds.

Yes,
Now I see love.
A strange beast on the hunt
Yet constantly hunted itself.
Desirous and desired,
Devoured and hungry,
Claiming a moment
To capture a life.

I see its conflictions clearly.
Its eternal dissatisfaction
Merely
The adventurous spirit
Of Icarus on wings of emotion
Above an ocean
Of the unknown, untried.
Seeking the unending
Me.

JOSEPH M. PINKO

For My Friends At School

Blue rise
Of the dawn,
Like morning-glory
Climbing a string,
Builds through the sky
To wake us from dreams
To wake us to Aprils
Of spirit

Let us turn cartwheels
Down the long road
Of the sun,
Let us know joy
Where the mockingbird sings—
A green tower of song
From its loft
In the tree,
Let us steep ourselves
In colors
Of tulip and bird,
Their golds and their ambers
And whites
Touching
Wonder-new worlds
Of the heart

Let us praise, now,
This morning of year,
This time
Of the beauty
Of earth,
This time of the beauty
Of birth.

CHARLES B. TINKHAM

Campground Cat

Thin-ribbed, the baby cat glides
through fall leaves
pawing low, red ones,
to park inside the freshly camped Travel Mate.

—He looks like aunt Debbie's cat—the kids say
and play with paws stretched roofward,
their playmate among skinpeeling birches,
meowing at the autumn breeze.

—Fill the yellow ashtray with milk. . .

Emptied by ten seconds of tongue-stroke
and plop,
like hooked bass slipped through fingers
he's gone.

ADEODATO PIAZZA NICOLAI

The Circus

*Canvas tents, old and battered,
inhabiting an array of sordid talents.
White knuckles clutch the trapeze bar
while brave young men tame ferocious lions.
Frowning clowns captivate a gleeful audience.
soon—*

the laughter stops.

*Crowds exit, filled with memories,
tents tumble to earth,
packed—
awaiting their next destination.*

LAURA LOSER





Cliff Alley

Waiting

She sits and waits—for someone to come? No, she waits and waits—for what? Death. That's what she says, my Great Aunt Agnes.

Her home is a semi-private room in a nursing room made livable by the few personable items that adorn it—greeting cards of past events taped to the wall, now-stale cookies passed out from a church group weeks ago, a crocheted doily, a religious statue and her rosary. An afghan made by her niece adorns the bed.

She sits on the bed as though a part of it. Her small body is shrunk with age. Her pale skin a mass of wrinkles forming a kaleidoscope of patterns with each new movement. Her once thick red hair is now a yellow-white gossamer revealing a pink scalp. She moves slowly and carefully stumbling occasionally due to a false sense of security from using a walker. The only reminder of her past is a brightness in her eyes even though they've faded pale blue. Somehow the way she cocks her head and looks at you with a slow smile you can believe the stories your parents told you of her.

Now she's a wrinkled shell housing memories but when those blue eyes were at their brightest she was full of life. She would probably have been a strong advocate of women's rights. She was a diminutive woman in size only but a dynamo of determination.

She was born in Yugoslavia and married there at the age of 16. While her husband Josef was in the army, she lived with his parents and worked in the fields. She had only one child who died when he was less than six months old from smallpox that hit the village in epidemic proportion. Just before World War I started Josef left for America. They couldn't afford to go together so Agnes stayed behind to help his parents. The war and finances prevented their reunion for seven years. Finally she was summoned. Not speaking any English she arrived in New York with a tag identifying her and her destination. In the mysterious ways of foreign immigrants—partly luck, partly Divine Providence, and partly the Immigration Service—she arrived in Indiana Harbor to resume her marriage in her new country.

She adapted quickly to the American way of life. She learned passable English, dyed her hair, wore fashionable clothes and was always out shopping or visiting.

Much to Josef's chagrin she also learned to drive—not formally. Her stubborn streak led her to do things her own way. One

afternoon while Josef was sleeping, she decided to drive his car the short distance to the store. With no lessons, she got the car out of the garage and proceeded down the street barren of other cars. Things went surprisingly well until the streetcar in front of her stopped and she didn't. Fortunately in the 1920's cars only went about 20 m.p.h. and were built very sturdily. After a brief encounter with the conductor, it was determined no damage was done to either. Josef didn't need to know.

There were other things Josef didn't know. He worked shift work in the nearby steel mill. He cautioned her not to go out when he was working. As soon as he was out of sight, she left to go visiting, often returning just before he did. According to family stories, Josef always thought she was dutifully staying home.

Occasionally motor trips were taken to relatives in Ohio. In the 1930's the roads made the trip long and tedious. She packed homemade bread and a pistol. On one trip a hitchhiker was picked up against her wishes. She slipped the gun out of her purse and held it in her folded arms. Catching a glimpse of the gun the hitchhiker grew uneasy and got out in the next town.

After many happy years together, Josef died suddenly in 1957. Agnes went on admirably for many years. She drove anywhere she had to. She rented the basement and back of her large house to all nationalities. The neighborhood became a little United Nations—a Croatian landlady renting to Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Serbians simultaneously. The neighbors were just as varied in backgrounds.

Gradually age caught up to Agnes. She became forgetful and weak. For several years she had bouts of dizziness causing her to blackout. She was often found lying on the floor too weak to get herself up after a fall. After a few broken bones resulting from such falls, it became clearer that she must enter a nursing home. She fought it. For two years she went in and out of various nursing homes claiming something was wrong with each one. When her car and home were sold by her nephew, she seemed to finally realize her last claims to independence were gone and resolved herself to living in a nursing home.

Now she is waiting. She wears a cross, prays her rosary in a room decorated with holy pictures. She is no longer just waiting for death. She is actually praying for it.

MARY C. MATOVINA

FIREWORKS

She was not superstitious about most things, but since Nora had been twelve years old, she had looked on New Year's Eve and Day for signs of what would come to pass in the year ahead. Most of the time she took her family's quiet celebration of the holiday as a sign of a pleasant, if perhaps rather dull, year to come. It wasn't much of a superstition, I suppose. She accepted the loving security of her family without hesitation or question. Her parents and her sister regarded her in much the same way. It was a comfortable life.

Nora read books. She did not talk about them to any one. She did not read them in school. She sat under trees in summer and in her room in winter and read and wondered what it would be like to be in France, or to be dirty and abandoned and hungry, or to be an aviatrix.

In time, she married. She still played her secret game of prophesying her future one year at a time by the quality of her New Year's holidays. She read less. Her children grew, but they did not read books. They were somehow different, and, though she loved them dearly, she did not understand them. When they left home to have their own apartments and families, Nora was sad. She grieved, but she understood that they needed independence.

New Year's remained a time of quiet contemplation, with a family dinner sandwiched between the Rose Parade and the Orange Bowl game.

With the children gone, Nora began to write little stories and poetry. She showed her work to no one but Richard, and even he waited courteously for her to show him what she was working on.



John Bolinger

It was only since Francine married that Nora became impatient with her life. She spent more time on her writing. She had time, at last, to read, but her old favorites no longer pleased her.

She depended on Richard. Her life with him was not different from her childhood: pleasant, comfortable, but never quite exciting. Richard was a good sport. He got out Henry's ten speed and joined Nora when she cycled; he tried to improve his tennis game; he bought strawberries and annual plants for her garden; he admired her decorating projects. But Richard did not share Nora's discontent, nor did he quite understand—perhaps no more than did Nora herself—her growing need to change her life.

He was surprised, in spite of Nora's recent whims, when she suggested that, instead of quietly watching the New Year in at home, as they had usually done, they spend the night at the New Country Inn. He had to admit that it was a fine idea. Their room was great, the orchestra, excellent, the champagne at midnight, perfect. The singing of the crowd and the fireworks display over the river had been absolutely delightful.

Nora found being surrounded by strangers mysteriously appealing. She danced, she sang, she gasped as they watched the rockets bursting high over the river and reflecting on the glassy surface of the water at the same instant.

Nora found being surrounded by strangers mysteriously appealing. She danced, she sang, she gasped as they watched the rockets bursting high over the river and reflecting on the glassy surface of the water at the same instant.

They slept later than they had planned and had to pack hurriedly in order to be home in time to greet the family and prepare dinner. They discovered that they didn't miss the Rose Parade; besides, they could see the highlights on the evening news.

Nora didn't find time to think about herself until evening, though she had gradually become aware of a peculiar feeling. At first she had been almost fearful, but soon she realized that it was the sensation of being very excited. It made her recall the party her parents had had for her for her sixth birthday and her anticipation of first grade. She said nothing to Richard. But the feeling, and her unwillingness to share it with Richard, struck Nora as being odd.

Although it was becoming late, Nora was not tired. She wrote a short poem about Richard, which seemed to come to mind fully developed; she began the outline of a short story. Suddenly, it became clear to her. This was going to be her year! The something that she had sensed, but had never know, was happening at last. She went up to bed and slept without stirring.

Winter passed to spring and Nora noted every change, remembered other winters and springs, and wrote. The mysterious thrill of excitement returned several times.

One morning as she was finishing the breakfast dishes, she realized that the sun was shining more brightly than usual. Red and gold beams flashed before her eyes. She blinked. She closed her eyes, but she could see the flashes redly through her closed lids. She stopped, dried her hands, and stood, staring out the window. The flashes continued, and began to end in sparkly trails. She was amazed. She lost her sense of time. It seemed to her that she was about to have a vision, a superb mystical experience—one that she had long been awaiting. She slipped off her apron and draped it over a chair. She stopped at a mirror and combed her hair.

The flashes gradually increased. She stumbled as she hurried up the stairs to her room. Breathlessly, she dropped to her chair and reached for her notebook and pen. The flashes were now so brilliant that she could scarcely see the common objects in her room. She could feel her heart and her head pound as her vision, now completely bathed in scarlet, focused on the arcing flashes. It was so much like fireworks she could even hear the snap and whooshing sound of rockets and dull thuds like those of distantly exploding firecrackers.

It was incredible! She could not concentrate on her writing; each new flash seemed more beautiful and exciting than the others. At last, she stopped trying to write and bent forward to rest her throbbing head on her arms.

Richard found her there when he returned in the afternoon. She was still slumped over her desk; her pen had fallen from her hand; her notebook had slipped to one side. Three words had been written, scribbled, really, over the page: "The Beauty, beauti. . ."

B.E. BALOG

Prairie

It is a little town
Set apart
On Midwest prairie
Where sun sweeps
Row after row
Of rustling corn
And sleeps through the night
In the unbroken dream
Of wheat:
Only roads
Shuffling past
Weeded water ditches
Or turning brown
Under the build
Of rain-dark clouds
Connect it to anywhere:
An old windmill
Staggers at the sky,
And a boy hardly moving
Stands in the blue-black
Shadow of a porch:
Under the beech
In the yard,
Wind sits listless
In the tire swing,
And like a silence
The mailbox leans
Against the closing distance
Of the sky.

CHARLES B. TINKHAM





Cliff Alley

Living Alone

I want to split in two like a bean
Sending my roots deep down
Into the firm, rich loam of a soul;
I want to wrap my arms, tendril-like,
Around the sturdy pole of another
Shedding my skin as the seed
That kisses soil;
I want to begin anew,
Forever growing without question,
Clean as the sun that unfurls leaves
One by one.

I want the kind companionship
Of two eyes
That blind me from the world;
An ear, full as the sea,
That whispers like a shell
Be me, be me.

I want two hands, like petals,
To cover the wound I hide;
And a body, lean but strong,
To help shoulder the weight of wrongs

Like the cross I drag
Through the Golgotha of my heart.

GARY CZERWINSKI

How IT was and IS

*You carry the candle away
to fight the Frost.
You leave me alone to find the stars.
I weak and in need spray visions when I sing.
Asylum dawns scatter my horizons with madness:
a new frontier I've crossed.*

*You ask the tumulting question.
I gather the melodies.
Both of us criss-cross into other fantasies;
we file in harmony sharing new messages.*

*I tear walls in need of dreams.
But you only find time to dance,
and play with the Heavy Heads that may
reign over the Land and stars.
I understand: I feed on dreams.
I don't understand: you a pilgrim seeking the Supreme.*

JESUS A. GUTIERREZ

To Sandra

Your Puppy-dog eyes
Are half moons
Set in the darkness of your face.
Your sweet Zephyr-sighs
Sing sad tunes
Of long-forgotten days—
But you have not forgotten;
They're all written,
All hidden
Within the deepness of your eyes:
Lilac-scented lullabies
All silenced
By Time's empty cries;
To be revived only
Through Puppy-dog eyes.

BAMBI HELD

Rainy Day

The toothless woman clutches her shopping bag
and sits on benches of Lake Shore Drive
waiting to sell candles
that smell like bubblegum.

Her hair is as white as
the sails of boats bobbing
in the harbor.

Streets are the arteries
that keep her blood moving,
throbbing traffic the sound
that reminds her she is alive.

She is hungrier than the birds
that come for crumbs she does not have
while tires on wet pavement
make a sound like sizzling bacon.

After the rain
over gothic shapes of boats
the sun glimmers
through a filigree of clouds

like a rose window in the church balcony
where she drank whiskey one Christmas eve.

JOHN BOLINGER



CHILDREN'S SECTION



Karen Schuster

SUPERBOWL XIII

All is quiet
Everything is still
No working.
No playing,
No traveling,
No studying,
The whistle is blown
the game begins,
And when it's all over
Pittsburgh wins.

CHRIS HUPPENTHAL

Much Like Me!

*The beach is so much like me,
With mysteries no one can see,
As I see the sun rise,
What does the ocean see through
its eyes?
An Eagle so big and grand,
or a tiny face in the sand?
It changes with the wind
like I do!
When will tomorrow be?
What will become of me?*

FRANCES MRVAN

My dad is very neat,
My mom cooks great meat,
My sister always takes my seat,
My brother has smelly feet,
My big sister can't be beat.

BILL SHORT

*When I was young it seemed to me
my folks were getting old.
Mom was wrinkled dad was bent
and all they did was scold.
We needed love but work came first
and there wasn't time for this,
And what I missed the most I think
was a grandma I could kiss.*

ROBERT DENMY

*Summer
Hot, Vacations,
Baseball, Swimming, Fishing,
Freedom, Sunburn, Cold, Snow,
Football, Shoveling, Captivity
School, Basketball,
Winter*

ROBERT GERMICK



Cliff Alley

*Hiding in the tall grass
Is the king of the
Snakes he pauses for a moment then
Slithers away*

TOM KUDELE

*The world is full of chattering people
And people that mumble to themselves,
Lecturing and prattling,
Keeping no secrets.*

KAREN MARKOVICH

*Silly mice
Quietly go
Under the stairs to
Eat cheese
And they don't even need a
Knife*

KATHY SHAVER

sound poems

Boys
Often
Punch each other.

AMY NELSON

Bang goes the baseball; crash goes the window
Oh
Oh
My mother's going to kill me!!

TOM TEENEY

Gosh! Another
Rainy afternoon
On a Saturday
And I have
Nothing to do.
JENNI KASPER

Bad ghosts were
'Owling on
'Olloween

DAN BUKSA

Petting a kitty while it's
Using you for a bed
Rolling your hand down its fur
Restraining itself from any work
Its
Nose pink and icy cold
Gazing into darkness with a rumbling sound inside it.

DANA KECKICH

Our feet
Were hurting
JIM AULTMAN

Children listen to
Hear the bells
In the steeple
Making joyous sounds
Everywhere.

KAREN MARKOVICH

*Grumbling brothers
Roaring when awakened
Out with you, sister!
Use the door!
Can't you see I want to sleep
Have some sympathy for me.*

DIANE DRAZBO

The water in the creek,
isn't there anymore,
It's dried to sand,
and turned to stone,
No one lives in the old house, anymore,
It's emptiness stands alone,

The door of the house,
entangled with vines,
long grown over the boards,
the eagles fly, preying,
the mice scamper, nowhere,
the spirits, they're the lords,

The water in the creek,
isn't there anymore,
It's dried to sand,
and turned to stone,
No one lives in the old house, anymore,
it's emptiness stands alone,

A silence,
deafened by reclusiveness,
Never seen clearly,
in distant vision.

ALISON FRAK

Did You Ever Wonder?
Did you ever wonder what it's like to be skinny?
To put on the worst-looking clothes, and still be pretty?
But then, did you ever wonder what it is like to be fat?
To be round and jolly and have a good hearty laugh?
Or, what about the girls who are in between
Either they're a little too chunky, or a little too lean.
I know that we all couldn't look the same,
But wouldn't it be fun if there was such a game.
We could try each type for a little while,
and keep the one that best fits our style.

SUZANNE DUVALL

My English Teacher

Her ain't bad
Her learns me how to talk
Her learns me speling, two
Oh, English learner, what
Would I dew whith out yew.

MILDRED JACKSON



Luis Torres

Friendship

Like apples of summer
uplifted
golden green
easily polished,

Like apples of autumn
wrinkled by whistling winds of November
still hanging
mellow
old gold,

Or cluster on weaving branches
no longer hidden by chattering leaves
apples of winter
golden ochre
snow-capped
still hanging
hanging low.

KIYO MORI

JIMMY AND HIS U.F.O.

One day I saw something that looked like this:



It kept flying around in circles. Then it started to flash a light. I started to stare at it, then it went away. The same day at night, I heard a howl, so I woke up and went to the window and saw a U.F.O. sitting on the ground like a chicken. I could not see inside it because it did not have any windows. So I started to get dressed and it started to flash its light. I went to the window and closed the shade. The U.F.O. started to make noise. A little door opened; I went to my front door and went to the U.F.O. It said, "I'm Gloopy from Droopy." The U.F.O. said, "Why don't you have dinner with me?" I said, "No, I'm not hungry." The U.F.O. grabbed me with a plastic arm. I broke the arm and it said, "Ouch." I tried to run away, but the U.F.O. plopped a rubber egg on me which looked like this:



I could not get out of the egg, so I burnt my way out with a pack of matches. The U.F.O. said, "You are hard to catch. That's why I'm leaving." "Why do you want to catch me?" I said. The U.F.O. said, "To bring you back to Droopy." Droopy looked like this:



JAMES BALCZO

The Mysterious Man

One day, when walking home from a party, I heard a noise. I asked my friend if he heard it, but he didn't, so we continued walking. I was still thinking about the noise when I noticed my friend was gone. I looked all over for him, in the bushes, in the trees. I even called for him. There was no answer, except for a lady telling me to shut up. I continued walking. A minute later I heard two sounds in back of me. I looked and there were four glowing eyes. I ran down an alley, and through a yard as fast as my feet would take me. I noticed they were gone, so I went back to the alley. I walked back and there they were—the four eyes. What a surprise, it was my friend and a stray cat.

MIKE WERKOWSKI

CONCRETE

I
d r
o a l
n i t a P
' l n is a
T i i
k n
e !

I t h u r t s
my t
f
e
h e l s
e a d
I e a d .

JIMMIE ZUBAY

THE SECRET MEETING OF THE SEASONS

Once, a long time ago, the season of Spring wanted to be like Winter. Winter wanted to be like Summer. Fall wanted to be like Spring and Summer wanted to be like Fall.

Because of this, all of the seasons were mad at each other. Each season would butt in the other season so that one minute it could be snowing and cold, and the next minute it would be sunny and warm.

So the world was a real mess. The farmer's crops always died. The little children's snowmen always melted. All of this went on for about a year. Then the four seasons decided to have a secret meeting on the planet Zings.

"The meeting will now come to order," said Spring, "you all know why we are here."

"Yes," said Summer. "I will start out. I don't think we should have to be the same season year after year."

"Neither do we," said Summer and Fall.

"But what can we do," said Fall.

"We could change with each other," said Summer.

"That would be super," Fall said enthusiastically.

"What about you, Winter?" Spring said.

"Well, in the beginning I wanted to change places, but now that I think about it, I don't think it would be wise. You see, we each have our own characteristics. We can't be someone else," said Winter wisely.

"I'll never again want to be someone else," said Spring.

"Neither will we," the others chimed in.

"Now let's go out and do our jobs," said Winter.

JILL TURNER



Margie Scott

*Loneliness is. . .
A 40" pizza,
and no one to share it with!*

AMY NELSON

Deep into the night
I go home on my bike,
Under the hanging street lights
But they do not hang.
They are bolted onto the posts
Planted into the ground
As they were when they were alive.

The birds are asleep in the trees,
Some of them lit up by
the man-made sunlight.
How can the birds sleep
With the buzz
A street light gives off?
They are accustomed to it,
Just as we are of the bird's singing
In the dew dripped morning.

ERIK BALOG

LIGHTNING

It happens when
the rain does
fall and sometimes
when it doesn't
at all. It sneaks
up like a thief
at night and
likes to give
somebody a
fright. It strikes
the trees and
house too.

Lightning rods
conduct them
through. It's
very dan-
gerous as
you can
see but
it has
a
unique
beau-
ty to
me.

SUZY CHICK

It Only Comes But Once A Year!

It only comes but once a year,
and when it comes you know it's
here. It comes down slow from
out of the sky, but once it
has landed it's shoveled aside.
It looks like a blanket covering
spring, trees and grass and
everything green.

Now it is gone and spring
is here, but it will be back,
just wait till next year.

KRISS KAMMER

Limerick

*There once was a sailor named Rusty
Who was very old and crusty
But he still sails
Even though he ails
And his cabin is terribly musty.*

DAN BUKSA

*I wish. . .
I wish I were as smart as George Washington.
I wish I were a president.
I wish I were famous!
I wish I were a policeman.
I wish Adam would quit being nosy.*

ERIC GERHARDT

Septone

8 My brother and I always fight—
3 no one wins
6 Sometimes we get yelled at
5 but always fighting
3 but we do
1 have
6 good times together

DANA KECKICH

*I wish. . .
I wish I would be a famous horseback rider.
I wish my bird would sit on my finger.
I wish my grandpa was well.
I wish my bird would stop sitting on her mirror.
I wish this could be in all the newspapers.*

KATE SCANNELL

SEPTONE

8 If a mere number is dialed
3 it can get
6 you in touch with persons
8 dear across this grand old country
1 thus
8 credit goes to Bell's family
0

DAN BUKSA

Briefests

When an elephant has a feather in its snout, he comes to me and pouts.
I say to him:

“Sneeze,
please.”
Chris Langer

When your cat runs in the street and a truck runs
over him:

“Flat
cat.”
LORI LOUDERMILK

What a zookeeper says to a drunken rhinoceros?

“You’re a wino,
rhino.”
CARL GERLACH

What a Japanese student says when his teacher asks him a question:

“Ah so,
I know.”
TOM TEENEY

What a husband might say to his wife who is trying to stay in shape:

“Run,
hon!”
AILEEN DIZON

A question a mother might ask her son William
after he shoveled the snow in the driveway:

“Chilly,
Billy?”
BILL RESETAR

What a chauffeur says to J.D. Rockefeller when he wants a raise?

“Hey Jay,
more pay.”
CARL GERLACH

When a police officer does something wrong and someone makes a citizen's arrest

"Stop,
Cop"

PATTY WATSON

Person commenting at a small party:

"Small
ball."

JOE COMPANIK

Request of a 7th grade boy on a hot spring day:

"Beach,
Teach?"

BILL RESETAR

Taking a Semester in School about Slimy Things

"Worm
Term."

DANA KECKICK

Before the big parade Saturday the band director said to the dry cleaner:

"No starch,
gotta march."

MEG GALVIN

What a boy said to his friend Nathan who is walking ahead of the boy, and the boy can't catch up with him:

"Wait,
Nate."

GERALYNN REGESKI

Said when children just get back from shoveling,

"Oh no!
More snow!"

KIM HITTLE

What an angry farmer might say after the barndoor slams on his finger:

"Darn
Barn!"

DIANE DRAZBO

SIMILE

As loud as a train
As loud as a cry for help
As loud as a jet-airliner
Is my dad snoring.

JOE KASTER

As scary as a ghost
as scary as a movie at night
as scary as a howl in the dark of night
is my teacher when we are noisy

BILL SHORT

Definition Poem

*Loneliness is. . .
Everyone leaving
and no one saying good-bye.*

JANE ETLING

Definition Poem

Loneliness is. . .
Your only good friend in class being sick.

JANE ETLING

TIME

I write poems because they rhyme
Sometimes I run out of time.

JERRY LEDUC

